



Igor Bondar

*Heavenly
paratrooper*

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A fantasy story



“Zolotoye sechenie”

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This book is about a very unusual Heavenly paratrooper who has come to Earth. A fantasy story.

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PART ONE

Angelo

The annual meeting with God was well underway. Hundreds of snow-white Angels sat at a long table completely engrossed in every word He spoke. When asked, they answered questions He put to them from time to time.

‘So,’ the Father addressed the gathering, ‘what are the most popular professions on the Earth now?’

‘Nothing has changed much, Father,’ quickly replied one of the Angels at the table. ‘All the same - lawyers, politicians, psychoanalysts.’

‘I see. What are three things that men desire most at the moment?’

‘Nothing new. Same as always: women, money and good food. These three fundamentals have not changed for thousands of years.’

‘No change for the worse - means good news,’ replied the Father optimistically. ‘What about the women?’

‘No changes there either,’ the responsible Angel reported. ‘Still in the first place by a huge margin is the desire for a successful marriage.’

‘And after that?’

‘There are various things: they want a better hairstyle than their neighbor or a romantic and touching TV series.’

‘I see.’ the Father sank into his thoughts for a few seconds. ‘What is the percentage of people on the Earth who are still interested in the miracles that I have been showing them for the past two thousand years?’

‘Two point three-seven percent’ replied another Angel quickly. ‘Less by three hundredths compared to last year.’

‘Not too many.’ commented the Father and having thought for a while, He asked, ‘How many people have an interest in illusionists and magicians today?’

‘Seven point fifty-two percent,’ a voice sounded out quickly, ‘up by one half of a percent.’

‘Uh,’ sighed the Father. ‘Let us switch to other topics. What are the percentage changes in the number of families on Earth?’

‘Father!’ the Angel responsible for this issue looked down in shame. ‘Could you please tell me, where we count homosexual families?’

‘Oh... Who would tell me about...Alright, let’s move on.’

‘Next up is honesty,’ quickly spoke another Angel. ‘Honesty is dropping at a rate of one half of a percent per year for ordinary people, two percent for rating agencies and statisticians, five percent for politicians.’

‘Is there any rise in honesty anywhere?’

‘Umm, weather forecasters! The accuracy of their forecasts has grown by half a percent this year.’

‘Well, at least there is some good news...’ the Father smiled unhappily. ‘So, with honesty falling at such a speed, mankind has not long to wait for complete dishonesty.’

He stood up.

‘So, my dears! In spite of this obvious and unhappy situation, we still must do something about it. Do any of you have any ideas?’

After a little while, an Angel respected by everyone, stood up.

‘Father! My friends and I would like to suggest something. It is quite obvious that today’s mankind already has little control over the situation. Crucial information about You and about our world does not reach those people who are still in need of it. So, we have come to the conclusion that help today can only come to them from outside - that is, from us. We think that we should send a few of our most talented Angels as volunteers to various countries on Earth. They will turn into people on Earth and try to make changes for the better.’

The Father thought for a while.

‘That is a good idea! I have been thinking about it myself but I could not bring myself to ask for it to be done. Actually, this may be mankind’s last chance.’

The Father looked lovingly at His Angels.

‘Are any of you ready to go to Earth as humans?’

Everyone at the table raised their hands.

The Father smiled warmly.

‘That was an incorrectly phrased question, but thank you my dears! I shall ask it in another way. Who of you perfectly understand the computer technology used by people today?’

The sea of raised hands became smaller.

‘Of those who are left, who can fluently speak all the languages on the Earth, knows all the earthly laws and can operate all means of transport?’

Fifteen hands remained raised at the table.

The Father looked at the Angels and smiled.

‘My friends, let us call this campaign Heavenly Paratroopers! Good luck to you all on the Earth! Help the people and I will be in constant contact with each of you.’

Sue

The Angel opened his eyes. He was lying on a sofa and the sun was shining brightly through the window of the room. He slowly turned his head looking around. Although the new interior was unusual to him, it was done in good taste.

The Angel slowly rose from the sofa and looked out the window. There he saw a few kangaroos on a distant meadow.

‘So, I am in Australia,’ he thought.

He then sat down and took a plastic card, that was lying on a small table beside him. It was a driver’s license with his photo and something was written beneath it.

‘Angelo Beninni,’ the Angel read his new earthly name with a smile.

Angelo stood up and went out into the yard.

‘Hello, Mr. Beninni! I am your new neighbor. My name is Sue, Sue Macintosh. The real estate agent told me you come from Italy?’

Behind a low fence there stood a slim suntanned blonde with a very pretty face.

‘Hello, Mrs. Macintosh,’ responded the Angel politely, ‘you are right, almost.’

‘Miss...’ smiled the blonde-haired beauty, ‘and you can call me Sue. Here in Australia we don’t like formalities.’

‘All right Sue,’ the Angel laughed, ‘I am always for simplicity too. Then, simply call me Angelo.’

‘What a beautiful name,’ the girl commented and then asked happily. ‘Well, maybe you could teach me how to cook spaghetti? I’ve been having trouble with that all my life.’

‘Oh, Sue! To be honest, I am the worst cook in our family, so sorry,’ Angelo replied, while thinking to himself: ‘First, I better try it myself somewhere.’

‘No bother.’ Sue replied optimistically. ‘There are many other dishes that I can cook quite well. What do you do?’

‘Sorry Sue,’ Angelo replied, slightly embarrassed. ‘It’s my first day here and I’ve many things to do at the moment. Perhaps, we can talk about everything a little bit later?’

‘Oh, of course,’ the girl smiled guiltily. ‘I’m sorry. I’m a terrible chatterbox. I understand you would have so much stuff to do right now.’

The girl moved away from the fence.

‘If you need any help Angelo, please just let me know.’

‘Thank you very much Sue. See you next time.’

The Angel walked away from the fence towards the house, looking up at the sky with suspicion.

‘Father, is this a coincidence?’

‘What can I say...,’ he heard a delicate answer.

‘Ahh-oh! Actually, I came down to Earth to help people.’

‘Well, yes. But I have never heard that jointly helping someone is a bad idea...,’ Angelo heard a tactful cough from the Father. ‘You will live here for quite a long time and she has a heart of gold, and she sings sooo...’

‘Father! I am an Angel and I have been with you and my brothers for thousands of years and ...’

‘Well you have temporarily become a human and for their pleasure I created families. Alright dear, decide for yourself. Go and look in the fridge first. You will need to have a good meal before going into the city.’

‘Thank you for your care, Father,’ smiled the Angel, ‘and I shall think about “the one who talks a lot and sings well”.’

‘Okay...,’ he felt the Father smiling, ‘ask her to cook medallions a la Australian some time. Yummy!’

The Angel came into the house laughing.

By this time, he started recognizing this new feeling of hunger inside himself. However, Angelo decided to first have a look at the house and area around it. His home was a beautiful single-story building standing in a big green meadow. Here and there grew palms and eucalyptus trees, and a forest lake adjoined one of his boundary corners. Yes, the Father had sent him to a great place on earth!

The Angel walked around the outside of the house and looked at the kangaroos in the distance feeding near the corner of the fence. He then took a quick look into the garage and there stood a brand-new Toyota Land Cruiser. The Father had taken care to ensure that he would have something capable of getting him to the most remote places of Australia.

The Angel then walked over to the swimming pool and dipped his foot into the water. In a few seconds, he had already pulled off his shirt, took a run up and leaped into water. It was time to start becoming a human.

Having got out of the pool, Angelo went into the house and opened the fridge. Its shelves were stocked with a variety of products. The Angel quickly made a few sandwiches, a cup of fresh coffee and having sat at the table, took his first bite.

What he felt was very unusual but very pleasant. ‘*So, not bad at all!*’ he thought to himself and the pile of sandwiches disappeared quickly. After his snack, Angelo felt happier and fortified.

Having looked at the clock, he changed his clothes, went into the garage and drove out. It was time for him to start his main mission. He did not need any GPS navigators as his intuition prompted him perfectly on which direction to head and what turn to take. Besides, the Angel could always ask the Father about anything and receive an immediate reply.

Thirty minutes later, Angelo parked his car in the center of the city, sat down on a bench and started to think about where he should start.

His first thought prompted him to go to a bookshop. It was worth having a look at what the people were reading today. Angelo turned his head to search and quickly realized where he should go. Within a few minutes, he had entered a fair-sized book store.

A girl at the cash register smiled at him pleasantly.

‘Hello! Are you looking for something in particular, Mister?’ she asked.

‘Umm...,’ the Angel tried to formulate his thought clearly, ‘I’m looking for spiritual books.’

‘Oh, we have a wide choice of spiritual literature,’ said the girl and, coming out from behind the register, she led him deeper into the store.’

Soon, she stopped near some large shelves.

‘Here!’ she said proudly. ‘Here are the books about karma cleansing, opening all chakras, a new book on transcendental yoga which by the way is very popular now.’

The girl took a few more steps.

‘Here, there are books about raising your energy, advice on business success and how to attract women,’ at that moment she shot a sly look at Angelo. ‘Other books are about achieving an astral body, experiencing enlightenment, achieving nirvana and so on.’

Angelo scratched his head.

‘Umm...,’ he looked slightly confused, ‘thank you very much, a great choice of books indeed. Is there something more classical? The Bible for instance?’

‘The Bible?’ Now it was the girl’s turn to be at a loss. ‘The Bible... There was something...I’ll search on the computer. I’m sorry, we are rarely asked about this kind of literature, you know.’

She rushed to the counter and after a few minutes appeared from another corner carrying the book he had asked for, wiping the dust from it.

‘Here you are!’ she said happily, handing him a red book. ‘We have classics too!’

Angelo thanked her warmly and asked her to reserve the book for him. He went on to the children’s books section. This time, he was followed by the eyes of several dozens of semi-naked beauties that were smiling from the covers of magazines.

However, his acquaintance with the children’s books didn’t cheer him up. Angry birds, vampires and star warriors stood out on main selling shelves, but there were still a few simple and kind books.

On his way back to the cashier, the Angel found one shelf of books about “Nature” which was the only one that gave him great pleasure. Having paid for the books, the Angel went out of the bookstore with a broad smile on his face – there were so many interesting things on the last shelf.

‘Yes Father, the state of earthly literature doesn’t look hopeful,’ he thought as he looked into the sky.

‘Have some coffee near the ocean,’ the Angel heard a philosophical reply, ‘and try a caramel cappuccino - they make the best there.’

Lifeguard

Thirty minutes later, Angelo was sitting at a table by the beach with a cup of coffee and was looking thoughtfully into the sky.

‘Yes Father, it is all very complicated here! How can we turn people in the right direction?’ he was thinking. ‘Perhaps it’s worth trying a good old miracle?’

‘Try it my Angel,’ he heard in response. ‘I will arrange something for you right now.’

A few minutes later, he saw a lifeguard jump up, run to the water and swim out to someone in trouble.

Angelo stood up and was about to walk towards the scene when he heard the Father’s voice.

‘Don’t hurry too much. First, he saves, then he does mouth-to-mouth breathing...’

The Angel sat back down and sipped his coffee smiling. He settled his bill with a “Paradise Bank” card and headed down to the waterline. By the time he reached the man lying on the sand, the lifeguard was rising to his feet.

‘It’s too late,’ he said sadly. ‘I’ll call an ambulance.’

‘Wait my friend,’ Angelo stopped him. ‘Do you want God to bring him back to life on my request?’

‘What do you mean?’

‘Well in the same way as always: I’ll ask God and He will resurrect him.’

Angelo raised his head to the sky and spoke loudly.

‘O Lord, please resurrect this man!’

In a second, the drowned man coughed, began to blink and soon raised himself up to sit on the sand. The lifeguard stood frozen with his mouth open.

‘How did you do that buddy?’ asked the astonished guy.

‘In the same way as always. These sorts of miracles have been occurring since very early times.’

‘Don’t fool around with me!’ the young man waved his hands.

Suddenly, he looked knowingly at Angelo first, then at the previously drowned man and smiled shrewdly.

‘Huh, guys! You both work together, right? Nice joke.’

Angelo tried to argue but the lifeguard burst out laughing.

‘I’ve never heard of such a trick before. How do you manage to hold your breath for so long? The stunt is absolutely terrific!’

‘No, my friend. The truth is that God helped me with that,’ the Angel tried to argue.

The lifeguard gave him a perplexed look.

‘So, this is the way you recruit people to your church, right?’ He burst out laughing again. ‘Sorry, but I’m not that sort of person. Okay? I’ll go and tell the other guys about it. All in all, the performance was brilliant. Great trick! Bye!’

The lifeguard headed to his watch tower, leaving Angelo open-mouthed beside the saved man.

* * *

A little while later, the Angel was again sitting at a table with another cup of cappuccino, following the Father’s advice.

‘Well Father, if miracles don’t work then...,’ Angelo started thinking very down-heartedly.

‘Wait a little while!’ he heard a happy voice suddenly. ‘If I had given up every time mankind turned away from us, it would have already ceased to exist.’

‘What do you mean?’

‘You better take the bag away from the chair beside you. Perhaps some guests might join you...’

Angelo looked around and saw the same lifeguard passing by the café, but he had not noticed him yet. The lifeguard seemed to be immersed deeply in his thoughts.

Suddenly, he turned his head towards him and looked at Angelo. The Angel felt that the young man intended to turn away and walk past him but something inside him seemingly made him change his mind. In a moment, he was approaching Angelo's table.

‘Hey, excuse me, can I join you?’

‘Sure! Take a seat,’ Angelo replied happily.

The lifeguard stretched out his hand.

‘My name's Mike.’

‘Angelo,’ replied the Angel shaking his hand.

Mike ordered a beer from the waiter and continued.

‘The guy on the shore ... He really does not know you,’ smiled the lifeguard. ‘Unless he's a first-class actor.’

‘He doesn't know me, that's correct,’ Angelo smiled in return.

‘Then could you please explain what the hell is going on here?’ Mike looked intently into the eyes of the Angel.

‘It's about what I've been telling you from the start buddy,’ Angelo smiled, ‘and hell has absolutely nothing to do with it.’

‘So, you're assuring me ...’

‘I'm not assuring anyone of anything Mike,’ the Angel interrupted him. ‘You saw it with your own eyes and it's up to you to believe it or not.’

‘Oh. What's going on in the world,’ Mike sighed and sipped his beer that had just arrived.

‘A good honest guy.’ Angelo heard a familiar voice. ‘I have been looking after him for quite a long time.’

A big fly landed on the table near Mike. Some thought flashed in his head and at the same moment, he slammed his hand on the table. The fly left dead lying on a wooden surface.

‘Can you revive it too?’ Mike looked at Angelo with attention.

‘Father, what shall we do?’ the Angel asked in his thoughts.

‘That was a good fly, let it live!’ he heard a cheerful voice as the fly revived and quickly flew into the sky.

Mike dropped his glass. While he was wiping the table and gathering pieces of the glass, Angelo was talking to the Father.

‘I like my new job! It is very entertaining and creative.’

‘Totally agree with you. It’s time to start your work now, my dear, this client is ready!’

‘Thank you,’ replied Angelo and looking at Mike, he could not help smiling. ‘Yes, a better “ready” client it was hard to imagine.’

When the mess was finally cleaned up and Mike had a cup of hot coffee in front of him, he found his tongue again.

‘Angelo, would you please explain to me again just what is going on here?’

‘Well, nothing special. God exists, that’s all,’ the Angel replied with a smile.

‘So? He does everything for you?’

‘You can answer that yourself. You’ve seen it all,’ Angelo replied to him.

‘Who are you then?’

‘Someone who believes in God and loves Him. No less and no more.’

‘So what? If I believe in God and love Him, I’ll manage to do the same things?’

Angelo thought for a while.

‘Well, firstly, you’ll have to work long and hard on yourself. However, if you live honestly and follow His commandments, then with time, interesting things will begin to happen in your life.’ At last, Angelo was able to sip his now cold coffee.

‘Oh,’ sighed Mike. ‘I’ve been living here for twenty-six years, working normally, saving people, drinking beer and bang! And now news - God exists and He is very close to me.’

‘Something like that, mate. Only thing is, this “news” is thousands of years old.’

‘Maybe so. But right now, Angelo, I’ve got to think this over,’ Mike said and having paid for the beer and coffee, he stood up from the table. ‘Would you give me your phone number?’

Angelo put his hand into his pocket smiling and pulled out a business card that had on it: “Angelo Beninni” and his telephone number below.

Mike slowly took the card and put it into his pocket.

‘Well, I’ve got to go friend,’ he waved his hand and moved towards the exit, then he stopped a few metres away and turned around, ‘and, well, thank you for showing me so much. Perhaps that’s exactly what I need now.’

Having said that, Mike left.

* * *

Angelo, inspired by his first success, headed home. He finally made up his first plan.

He came home and went straight to his office that was equipped with the latest technology. Having turned on his computer and all the displays, the Angel sat down behind the keyboard. In the next few hours, he registered himself on twenty of the world’s largest social networks, half of which were in English and the rest in Spanish, Italian, Russian, German, French, Chinese and Japanese.

On all these sites, he posted the same information about a man who, in the name of God, resurrected a drowned man on an Australian beach. Angelo could foresee the first reaction to this message but he knew there was going to be a second reaction like the one he had already seen today.

He then turned off all the equipment and went to the fridge in a happy mood. Walking across the room, the Angel noticed a business card lying on the bar. He stopped, picked it up and read it with a smile: “Angelo Beninni. University of Italy, expert in

Christian heritage.” Now, he knew what he could tell his female neighbor about his work.

After having a snack, the Angel went to his bedroom, yawning. His human body apparently needed to rest. The moment he lay down on the bed he fell into a deep and tranquil sleep.

* * *

The Angel was woken up by an early morning telephone call. He pressed a green button on the receiver and heard a familiar voice.

‘G’day Angelo, it’s Mike from the lifeguard tower, remember?’

‘Of course Mike. Good morning.’

‘Angelo, could we meet somewhere today?’

‘Of course. I can drive up to the café at one o’clock. Where we talked yesterday. Is that alright?’

‘Quite alright Angelo,’ replied Mike. ‘Thanks and see you later.’

The Angel made his way into the kitchen, quietly humming something and began to make a coffee for himself. The day had begun very joyfully.

While having breakfast, the Angel looked through a wide window out to a clear sky and recalled his last meeting with the Father.

God had gathered only fifteen Angels who He would send to Earth.

‘My Angels!’ He said to them, ‘Hard work lies ahead of you. First, you will remain humans until the end of your life on earth. I have made all the necessary preparations for you. There, you should live your lives listening to your hearts and me. The powers of darkness will soon know about you and will probably try to put sticks in your wheels. Do not pay any attention to this as they do not have any real power. I will stay in contact with you every moment and you can ask me about anything. Look for unusual approaches that could help motivate the people on Earth. If any of you has success anywhere, I will tell the rest of you about it. All of you will have credit cards which people on earth use, so you will never be in need of anything. If you need a miracle somewhere on the Earth, do not hesitate to contact me. Go my dears to Earth and help the people there! We are all relying on you!’

Peter

After breakfast, Angelo decided to drive around the city to look at some local churches. He had decided to confine himself to a visual inspection only, but one small temple located in a picturesque place enticed him so much he could not resist going inside. Rather suspiciously, three white doves sat on the lawn at his entrance and looked invitingly at him.

The Angel was walking slowly in a long hall when he saw a priest sitting at a small table in its far corner. Angelo came up to him.

‘Good morning father!’ he said politely.

‘Good morning young man,’ the priest raised his head. ‘Have you come to pray or have you come to see me?’

‘I have recently come to this city and I would like to ask you a couple of questions.’

‘I will gladly answer your questions; your name is...’

‘Angelo,’ the Angel said his name.

The priest looked at him with interest.

‘Could you tell me father, how many people really believe in God in this city?’ Angelo asked his question.

The priest stood up slowly, came out from behind the table and walked up to the Angel looking very attentively into his eyes.

‘Could I tell you my recent dream instead of the answer?’

‘Of course,’ smiled the Angel anticipating something good.

‘It occurred a few days ago. It was the first time in my life I have seen God himself in my dreams. He said that I would soon see a messenger from Him,’ the priest paused, ‘and that he would ask me an unusual question.’

The Angel was looking into his eyes with curiosity and kept silent.

‘What do you think of this dream, young man?’ the elderly priest looked at him with considerable interest.

‘I think that our Heavenly Father knows who may be shown such dreams,’ Angelo smiled happily.

‘Is this you?’ finally, the priest asked outright.

‘Yes,’ Angelo replied simply.

‘So it is true? Bless the Lord!’ the priest reverently took the Angel’s hand. ‘Welcome to my temple, dear messenger of God!’

‘Just call me Angelo,’ said the Angel with warmth.

‘Why did you tell me the truth?’ the priest asked him with curiosity.

‘Because father, you are probably the only person in this city who is ready to believe me.’

The priest nodded his head sadly.

‘It is quite possibly so, Angelo,’ and added. ‘Call me Peter.’

‘Good.’

Then Peter took the Angel’s arm in his arm and, not taking his eyes off him, led him into a room.

‘Let us go and have some tea and dessert! I am overwhelmed with happiness,’ he spoke joyfully but suddenly seemed slightly embarrassed. ‘And you, I am sorry... will you eat Angelo?’

‘I most definitely will Peter!’ the Angel laughed, ‘now I am just an ordinary human being until the end of my earthly life.’

‘Wonderful!’ said Peter gladly. ‘Will you live in our city?’

‘I think I will for a while.’

Angelo followed this good and happy man and was filled with a feeling of great love. ‘At last I have found one of us,’ he was thinking cheerfully.

* * *

The Angel and Peter continued their talk while drinking tea with biscuits.

‘Regarding your question Angelo, there is little faith left in people,’ said the priest. ‘People come here mostly for wedding celebrations and some religious holidays. At least, that’s something.’

‘Yes, I’ve managed to notice that already,’ replied Angelo. ‘Something must be done about it. That is why the Father sent me here. Let us think about what we can do?’

‘It needs to be thought through very carefully,’ Peter responded thoughtfully.

‘Perhaps create a miracle here?’ Angelo smiled and retold the story about the drowned man that happened yesterday.

The priest listened to it attentively.

‘I understand, but now with those fantastic computer games, different stunts and so on, young people are unable to distinguish between what is real and what is not. It will be hard to convince them that it is an actual miracle and not just one of those stunts or illusions,’ Peter replied. ‘Your Mike is an exception.’

‘Perhaps some effulgence should suddenly appear around your church?’

‘Better not. They will easily find an explanation for that: the whole city now is decorated with some sort of Christmas lighting. They will simply assume it to be some type of new light.’

‘Perhaps, I should make the church rise into the air a meter above the ground?’

‘No, no, nothing like that. They will issue us with a fine for breaking the architectural look of the city.’

The Angel and the priest kept silent, deep in thought.

‘That’s what we have come to....,’ Peter shook his head a little in frustration. ‘Here, we have an Angel in our midst and we can create miracles but nothing that people would believe comes to mind.’

‘What has made the people of today so skeptical?’ Angelo switched to another topic.

‘I guess there has never really been a lot of people devoted to the Lord on earth,’ replied the priest. ‘And now television and computers distract and divert people from all the important information. They have become so absorbed in them, especially the youth, that they can’t do anything else.’

‘Perhaps we should shut it all off?’

‘That’s a good idea! But we need to carefully think through the consequences.’

‘Yes Peter, it’s not an easy thing to do. Peter, let’s think it all over from the beginning and let the Father prompt us.’

‘Agreed my dear Angel. We cannot make a step forward without God,’ the priest smiled. ‘Let's talk about something else. I recommend that you drive around the city tonight. It has been decorated beautifully for Christmas and there're many houses that are beautifully illuminated.’

* * *

The Angel drove to the beach café at the agreed time.

Mike was waiting for him near the café entrance. He stretched out his hand with a hearty smile.

‘G’day Angelo!’

‘Hello Mike,’ replied the Angel. They sat at a table and ordered something to eat.

This time, Mike did not rush to start talking and Angelo let him take his time. They drank some soft drinks and juice while looking at the beautiful waves by the beach.

‘My granny was a very religious person you know,’ Mike began, still looking at the sea. ‘She passed away when I was a little boy, but I remember well the stories she told me about God. It’s funny, but back then I didn’t have any doubts that it was all true.’

Mike stopped for a while and gave Angelo a look.

‘I’d almost forgotten that until yesterday.’

The lifeguard sipped some juice.

‘In the world I grew up in, I didn’t find any evidence of what granny told me about. The world today is living according to different rules and has other interests.’

‘I’ve noticed that already,’ Angelo said.

‘Yesterday, I decided to follow your advice after our talk and had a look at those commandments God left us.’

Angelo looked at the guy with interest.

‘So, how is it going?’

‘Not too well,’ Mike replied with an unhappy smile. ‘To start with, I have several girlfriends currently.’

‘Oh, poor boy!’ the Angel said sympathetically.

‘You think so?’ the lad looked up at him. ‘A lot of guys envy me, you know...’

‘The soul doesn’t need much,’ Angelo smiled warmly. ‘The soul needs only one close, loving and reliable friend. That’s what makes it sing, but unfortunately in some shallow relationships, most of that is lost. That is the law of the soul, my friend.’

‘It’s hard to resist when there are so many beautiful female tourists around all day long ...’

‘Well, yes. They also have their own desires: they want to find some prince,’ the Angel nodded, ‘and here you are, a handsome, suntanned man rushing to save people’s lives.’

‘Are you making fun of a poor lifeguard?’

‘Well just slightly,’ the Angel nodded. ‘Do I need to teach you how to get rid of them?’

‘I can do that myself,’ Mike smiled happily at last. ‘If there’s someone I don’t like, I say that I’m gay and go on describing in detail my boyfriend’s beautiful eyes. After that, they disappear just like the wind.’

It was the Angel’s turn to laugh.

‘That’s a creative approach!’

‘You bet,’ Mike said. ‘In fact, you might be right. I’ve been longing for the only one, but I can’t find her.’

‘God is in charge of people’s hearts. If while looking for the only one, you are dating lots of other women, why would God want to give you a gift?’

Mike thought for a moment.

‘Well, there is something in that... Thank you, I’ll think about it.’

After that, the lifeguard silently stared at the ocean waves. At the same time, Angelo was finally able to taste spaghetti.

‘Yesterday I was afraid,’ Mike spoke at last. ‘How far we have strayed from those Commandments.’

Having said that, he looked at Angelo with questioning eyes.

‘What will happen to all of us after we die?’

‘It depends,’ Angelo shrugged his shoulders. ‘Those who lived with sincerity not knowing the right way, will be dealt with one way, and those who knew the rules but broke them, will be dealt with in another way, and those who did very bad things will be dealt with in yet another way.’

‘And what about me?’ the young man asked seriously.

‘About you? If you repent sincerely and live and keep living correctly, then all will be well,’ Angelo replied.

‘So easy?’ Mike said surprised.

‘What do you think, why does all love God? Things are always simple with Him. So it has always been - everything is simple and sincere. Complications have been created by people.’

‘Yes,’ sighed the young man, ‘it looks like I need to do some serious thinking.’

Having finished their lunch, Mike and Angelo began to say goodbye to each other. Stretching out his hand, the young man hesitated slightly.

‘Angelo, do you think I can help Him somehow?’

‘Start dismissing in your harem first,’ the Angel laughed and added in a serious tone, ‘but if you can’t get rid of that desire, then give me a call.’

Songs of Angels

After their meeting, Angelo happily drove home.

‘It seems that it worked, Father,’ he thought cheerfully on his way.

‘Well it would be more correct to say that a seed has been planted properly. Let us hope that something beautiful will grow from it.’

‘Let us hope,’ the Angel repeated His words and asked: ‘How are the other Angels on the Earth doing, Father?’

‘Well so-so, similar to you. No breakthroughs at the moment. To be frank, I didn’t expect anything so soon.’

‘Anyway, thank you for your constant help Father!’

‘You are always welcome my dear. Take a drive around the city tonight. It is beautiful there!’

In a few minutes, Angelo had driven up to his house.

His neighbor Sue, who was working in her yard, waved at him happily.

‘Hello Angelo!’

‘Hello Sue!’ he replied and approached the fence. ‘How are you? What are you doing?’

‘Well, I’m changing a mandarin tree for a mango.’

‘Why? Don’t you like mandarins?’

‘I like mandarins, but my crows unfortunately love them too.’

‘Do your crows eat mandarins?’

‘No they don’t, but they are very clever. The crows drop the mandarins onto the ground and split them apart. Then, they wait until the worms come and then, they enjoy a meat salad.’

‘What smart crows you have!’ smiled the Angel.

‘Yeah, that’s why I’m replanting the tree. I don’t want my crows to be smarter than me.’

They both laughed.

‘Yesterday you asked me what I did for a living,’ the Angel said to Sue and offered her a business card.

She read the card quickly and looked at him with interest.

‘So you research Christianity? Is it interesting?’

‘Of course!’ Angelo replied. ‘What do you do?’

‘I’m a journalist working for a local newspaper. I’ve moved here because of my job. My parents and sister live in Melbourne now.’

‘Isn’t it boring for you to live here alone?’

‘A bit, but my work’s so interesting! There are new stories about people, animals, various events in the city and surrounding areas. I write articles about them constantly. In my free time, I fight with the crows as you can see,’ Sue smiled. ‘So there’s no time for boredom.’

‘Alright, I won’t distract you,’ Angelo said and suddenly, he remembered: ‘By the way, do you happen to know which streets in the city have the most beautiful decorative lighting for the Christmas season? I’m going to drive around tonight and I’d like to have a look at them.’

‘I sure do,’ Sue smiled. ‘I’m a journalist and I’ve just written an article about them.’

‘Oh, I’m so lucky!’ Angelo cheered. ‘Will you tell me?’

‘No, I won’t,’ Sue pouted capriciously and then glanced at Angelo cunningly, ‘but I could show them to you.’

‘It seems I’ve no choice?’ Angelo laughed.

‘It’s always pleasant to learn that your new neighbor is a smart man,’ Sue smiled and suggested happily. ‘Is ten o’clock okay?’

‘Quite so! I’ll have managed to finish most of my business by then,’ the Angel replied warmly and added: ‘Thank you very much.’

They said goodbye until the evening and he headed for the house smiling. Passing by the swimming pool, Angelo suddenly took off his shirt, ran up and jumped into the water.’

‘You know, at the end of the day, being a human is not that bad after all!’

“True! Especially, when you don’t occasionally forget to listen to your parents,’ he heard a deeply profound comment from above.

* * *

Sightseeing the city’s festive lights lasted until midnight. Sue proved to be an excellent guide and Angelo saw the most amazing lighting in the city. In those two hours, they had seen hundreds of various shining deer and dozens of houses flashing and glowing with an array of different lights.

During their excursion, they had eaten a large bag of sandwiches Sue had made and almost finished her big thermos of

coffee. Angelo, to his surprise, felt at ease with the delightful and merry young woman.

After sightseeing, Sue took him to a lookout high above the city from which they could see the city sprawling out below in its night's splendor. They got out of the car and stood under the stars.

'I love coming to this place. It gives me a special feeling.' For a moment, Sue seemed slightly embarrassed. 'Sometimes I like to sing here.'

'Do you sing?'

'A little,' the girl brightened up.

'Could I hear it?' Angelo asked her.

The girl did not make any excuses and having said, 'let me try,' soon began to sing some pleasant melody with a beautiful and strong voice. The Angel listened to her, enjoying her performance.

Having finished a piece of a song, she looked at him with curiosity.

'How was it?'

'That was very nice indeed! Nothing can hide your romantic nature.'

'Is it so noticeable?' Sue smiled self-consciously and looked at Angelo with interest. 'Do you like singing?'

'A little,' the Angel replied.

'Could I hear you sing too?'

'Well I don't know any of the local songs...'

‘Then sing the ones you know.’

‘They sound slightly different in my home,’ the Angel said and having thought, ‘what shall be - shall be’, started singing his favorite song, which he sang with his friends in Heaven.

When he finished singing in a few minutes, he looked at Sue and became frightened, as her eyes grew to a huge size.

‘Do you sing at the opera?’ the girl asked him with a trembling voice.

‘No, just for myself. Simply, all of my family love singing.’

‘You’ve got a talent few have! I’m a journalist and I know something about it.’

‘Talent you say? Well then, let it be our little secret. I like my profession more and I sing only for my soul’s pleasure.’

‘Well you know!’ Sue tilted her head and smiled, ‘I wouldn’t mind hearing something like that more often.’

‘Then you should take me to this lookout more often.’ Angelo laughed and poured the remaining coffee into his cup.

Having finally recovered, she asked him a new question.

‘Are you interested in what you do?’

‘It’s incredibly interesting!’

‘Hum, Christianity... My parents are quite religious too and they have possibly passed some of it on to me, but now, it is completely out of fashion.’

‘Fashion?’ Angelo smiled. ‘Love and kindness, I suppose, are still in fashion and these are parts of Christianity.’

‘Well, if you put it that way ...,’ the girl thought for a while and could not contain herself.

‘Angelo, will you sing something else for me please? Your voice is still spinning in my head. Besides, you know new songs that I’ve never heard before.’

‘Good,’ said the Angel and he began to sing another song.

The young woman was staring at him with her eyes wide open, feeling like she was drowning. But if anyone threw her a life ring to save her now, she would have pushed it away.

* * *

The next morning, Angelo woke up and first went to his cabinet. There, he dove straight into his computer. There were a lot of sharp mocking and skeptical comments about the news of the miracle. Only a few showed some cautious optimism.

‘Yes Father, not much good news for today.’

‘Well, the world has always reacted incredulously to the word “God”.’

Angelo made himself a cup of coffee and took it out into the garden. Sue was working in her garden again.

‘Good morning, Sue! Thank you very much for yesterday’s sightseeing!’ he said and asked: ‘Don’t you have to go to work today?’

‘Good morning, Angelo! I’m on Christmas holidays now until the middle of January,’ the girl replied and added: ‘Thank you very much for a beautiful night yesterday! Your songs have been on my mind the whole morning. Perhaps you could teach me and we’ll sing them together? I’ve got a piano too...’

‘With great pleasure!’ the Angel smiled in response as he instantly recalled one more piece of advice from the Father. ‘Now it’s my time to cook a meal for you before singing. I’ve heard about yummy medallions ala Australian. I’ll try finding them somewhere and buy them for our dinner.’

Sue dropped the spade from her hands.

‘Medallions ala Australian? That is my favorite dish! I can cook it to perfection. Don’t even bother, Angelo. I am making the medallions for dinner tonight!’

‘With you, luck is on my side!’ said the Angel with emotion and having said good-bye, he got into his car. It was time to go to Peter’s church so they could think over their next plan of action together.

‘Thank you very much Father for such a good neighbor,’ he looked gratefully at the sky. ‘It is much more pleasant being with her.’

‘You have not tasted the medallions yet,’ he heard a familiar voice. ‘Thank me after you taste them.’

Laughing cheerfully, the Angel drove out onto the motorway.

* * *

After the usual greetings and a couple of cups of tea and biscuits, Angelo and Peter returned to their last talk.

‘So, Peter, have any interesting thoughts come to mind?’

‘Yes,’ the priest replied thoughtfully. ‘First of all, it would only be right to show miracles to those people who can believe in them.’

‘I think you’re right,’ the Angel nodded his head.

‘It seems to me that you should deliver an eloquent sermon to the people. The Christmas holidays are coming soon and a lot of people will gather here. I will introduce you as my colleague. What do you think of that?’

‘That’s an interesting thought.’ Angelo smiled. ‘Worth trying to see what will come out of it.’

‘What has God told you?’ Peter asked the Angel with interest.

‘He doesn’t quite speak to me in words, Peter,’ the Angel corrected him smiling. ‘I always hear Him as thoughts in my heart.’

‘Is that so?’ Peter asked with surprise.

‘Well yes. It has always been like that and for people too. He spoke openly only when He was on the Earth. In Heaven, we all talk to each other with our hearts. Though, it is possible to express yourself with words and there too, but it is not so good. A feeling is always more expressive than a word.’

‘How interesting!’ Peter replied after a minute of silence. ‘So, what did you hear with your heart?’

‘You are right, we should begin with those who are capable of believing. It has been that way since the beginning of Christianity. Also, we should try telling very kind people about the beauty of Paradise. In fact, all of them strive for it unconsciously. Therefore, it is always important to strengthen them in faith.’

‘Right,’ replied the priest thoughtfully. ‘There’re many such people on the earth.’

‘As for the miracle, I reckon that it should be something not too great, but beautiful and undeniable,’ said the Angel.

‘Umm, probably so,’ Peter agreed.

‘Perhaps, songs of Angels or something like that,’ the Angel continued.

‘Nice!’ the priest smiled. ‘I’d like to hear them myself.’

‘You will hear them Peter,’ Angelo laughed. ‘We’ll ask it the Father one day. Perhaps, we’ll devise something more. The Father loves it when we try to create something interesting.’

The Angel then said good-bye to Peter and having come out of the church, he got into his car and drove to the ocean. He wanted to take a walk along the edge of the water.

Medallions ala Australian

That evening as a guest in Sue's house, Angelo was tasting those very medallions he had been told about. The girl had set a fine table and Angel liked this place - a cozy sitting room, a piano and an excellent hostess.

They talked about various things that were of interest to both of them. After they finished dinner, Angelo and Sue made some coffee and sat in some cozy armchairs. The girl asked the Angel a question.

‘Angelo, what do you like most about your work? Would you tell me, please?’

‘Beauty and height of all things related to God, his Son and Paradise,’ he replied simply.

‘Is there actually a lot of beauty and heights in Paradise?’

‘Of course! It is the foundation of all beauty. There is love without a shadow of ownership, friendship without the slightest reproach and trust without limits. There is great forgiveness and a great hope.’

‘It sounds so beautiful when you talk about it! I have never looked at Christianity from this point of view. It always seemed to me to be just a number of rules and rituals.’

‘That's the main mistake most people make. Christianity on earth is so distorted that mankind has almost completely lost interest in it.’

‘You speak as though you know it very well.’

‘It is to be expected that I would know something about it. After all, it is my work. And, the real Christianity is mainly a sphere of high feelings.’

‘If you were a priest in a church, I’d go to see you every day,’ Sue laughed.

‘Then, I’d soon become very fat I’m afraid.’ Angelo laughed. ‘You would feed me up with lots of tasty things.’

She burst out laughing.

‘But seriously Angelo, what exactly are you working on now?’

‘Specifically, I’m working on an attempt to bring to people the beautiful facts of Christianity which are almost forgotten today. I’m thinking about how to open their minds and explain to them that after this earthly life, there begins their real eternal life. They should be told to always look for purity inside their hearts. Their fate depends on that.’

‘Interesting,’ Sue thought for a while. ‘We don’t think much about what will happen in the future. No doubt, there will be something after death. But for some reason, these thoughts are always pushed to the furthest corners of our mind.’

‘Yet, they should be our first and foremost thoughts.’ The Angel smiled.

‘Perhaps the second.’ Sue said looking at the Angel somewhat peculiarly. ‘There are many interesting thoughts on the earth that women may think of.’

The Angel burst out with a happy laugh.

‘Well, if it is a lofty thought then maybe it can be in first place.’

‘I am very interested in the topic of our discussion,’ said Sue. ‘Will you keep me informed on what you are doing and what outcomes you get? Perhaps, I’ll even write an article on it.’

‘I will, with pleasure! It’s always pleasant to share the most interesting things in life.’

Angelo looked at the piano.

‘How will we sing? You don’t know the words of my songs?’

‘Not a problem, I’ll try singing with you by listening to my heart. You start.’

Their splendid concert lasted until midnight. In the middle of their singing, Sue suddenly stopped and looked around with surprise.

‘You know Angelo, it seems that the whole house sings with us. I can hear some voices around me ...’

‘It could just be an echo Sue,’ Angelo smiled and said in his thoughts: ‘Friends, will you sing a bit quieter? Sue is not ready for a choral singing yet.’

‘Sorry, brother!’ he heard his friends whisper. ‘You are right, we are singing too loudly.’

* * *

The next day Angelo entered the church and looked around. There were many people who had gathered for the Christmas celebrations. Peter came out smiling to meet him and they greeted

each other. Then, he introduced Angelo to the people who were in the church.

The Angel looked attentively at all present and spoke in a deep voice trying to touch every heart.

‘Merry Christmas, my dear friends! This is a great celebration. On this very day, slightly more than two thousand years ago, pure and light Love came to Earth for the first time. This was unusual for the world, as unusual as a flower rising from snow. This Love came to knock on each and every human heart. He came to tell people that everything that is now and always has been beyond the boundaries of this earthly world is love and only love! He came so that all who followed Him would be granted eternity.

Then Love first told people things which were unusual for that time. Yet what He told them were the only existing correct principles of life - both for an earthly life and the one after it. Love did not demand anything from people and did not ask for anything. And did not resist when people wanted to take His life.

Very few people at the time accepted that Love. And unfortunately, after some two thousand years, it was only retained in the hearts of not too many of His followers on Earth.

Now, people have many churches like the one we are standing in today. How I wish that the center of their foundation be that main thing, which at one time came to earth, so that the first and the last word here would be the word “Love”. Love for the Creator of this beautiful world. Love for the Giver of our life in this world and beyond this Earth! Love towards His Son, who came to this earth on this day for our sake. Love towards all other

people. Love of all that is around us. Love, which is the only thing that makes our life happy and meaningful...’

Angelo continued to speak and everyone in the hall fixed their gaze on him, without taking their eyes off him. They all felt some unbreakable connection with him. His words reached their hearts through some invisible channel and they understood that everything that was being spoken was the main and only truth on earth. The people watched him in silence and they kept that silence even after the Angel had finished his sermon.

Peter was standing slightly on a side, looking at him happily. He had never heard such an inspiring sermon in his life.

Someone in the hall clapped their hands and immediately, the rest of the people joined in clapping loudly. People rejoiced at the lofty feelings they had just touched. Their faces were shining with some special light on that Christmas day.

* * *

Having returned from the church, Angelo checked for messages on his computer. This time, there were two nice messages waiting for him. A lad from Sydney was asking for the name of the lifeguard and a girl from Japan was interested in getting his e-mail address.

‘Father! Do we have anyone in Japan?’

‘Angelo-san,’ he heard a familiar voice.

‘I should have figured that out for myself,’ laughed the Angel. ‘Wouldn’t it be more useful to switch the girl over to him? Perhaps it will be better as he can talk to her on the spot.’

‘That is quite reasonable, I think. I will switch her over to him.’

‘Thank you!’

The Angel then turned the computer off and smiled. The second wave although yet little more than spray had begun to form.

He then dialed Mike’s number.

‘Hello Angelo!’ the happy voice of the lifeguard sounded from the receiver. ‘If you’re ringing about my harem then I haven’t finished yet. There is the usual revolt and even some demands for compensation of termination...’

‘Hello poor Mike-sheikh!’ the Angel laughed and then asked. ‘I’ve called you for a different reason. Remember, you asked me if you could help?’

‘Sure! I haven’t lost that desire.’

‘Perfect!’ Angelo smiled, ‘then you’ll probably get some visitors. Someone here is showing interest in what happened on the beach.’

‘I got it Angelo!’ Mike replied cheerfully. ‘I’ll tell them as it was, describing it all in bright colors.’

At that moment, the young man hesitated slightly.

‘Angelo, what should I do if they ask me about you?’

‘Send them to Peter, he is a priest,’ the Angel gave him the number and street for the church. ‘He will know what to do with them.’

‘Will do Angelo,’ he heard and said good-bye.

The Angel looked out the window and saw that the sun was shining brightly in his yard. He made a cup of coffee, walked with it outside and sat down on a sun lounge near the swimming pool. His solitude was invaded almost immediately.

‘G’day, Angelo!’ he heard a familiar voice from behind the fence. ‘Could I join you for a cup of coffee and have a swim in your pool as well?’

‘After the medallions of last evening, dear Sue, I forgot the word “no” in regards to you.’ The Angel smiled and went to make a second cup of coffee.

When he returned, the girl was playing happily in the water.

‘How wonderful it is to have a swim on a hot day,’ she said. ‘I should consider a pool for my yard too.’

‘You can use mine whenever you want. I live alone anyway,’ the Angel replied and having put the coffee on the table, jumped into the water.

Heaving swimming enough, they sat on the sun lounges with their coffee.

‘Angelo!’ Sue called him and asked after she had a couple of sips. ‘The real estate agent told me you aren’t married. Do you mind me asking why?’

‘No secrets here!’ the Angel replied with a smile. ‘Quite simply, I didn’t feel a need before.’

‘And now?’

‘Now, I can’t answer that,’ the Angel replied thoughtfully. ‘Probably I’m very old-fashioned. In my opinion, a wife should first of all be a great close friend. I can’t see the purpose in having a family without it.’

‘Well, you are extraordinary!’ Sue reacted thoughtfully. ‘Everybody now looks for beauty, a nice figure, attention. But you’re speaking of a friend ...’

‘A very close friend!’ he corrected her, laughing.

‘Oh, you are not asking for few,’ the girl laughed and asked. ‘What do you mean by *friend*?’

‘Friends. There can’t be friendship if you are alone,’ Angelo corrected her. ‘Friends are people who are always sincere with each other. They have great respect for each other’s interests. Different viewpoints of true friends don’t hinder their friendship. Friends can always be trusted and they are always very kind to each other.’

‘And love?’

‘Of course, love too. Although, love and friendship are really tints of the same color,’ the Angel smiled. ‘But love as well, like water, may either be a shallow drying puddle or a deep ocean. So, I mean the latter, true love. It can never turn into dislike or hatred, as often happens with superficial love, or sympathy to be more precise.’

Sue rose slightly and looked at the Angel with interest.

‘It is so interesting what you are saying! Is it possible to find out in advance what kind of love a person can be capable of?’

‘In general terms, you can,’ Angelo replied. ‘Those capable of sublime love have a pure and kind heart. They are always forgiving and admit their own faults quickly. Their souls can’t tolerate even the slightest lie. They don’t feel superior to others. It is there, Sue, that sublime love can be found!’

‘It seems that I should start writing an article,’ Sue scratched her head slightly perplexed. ‘For some reason, I want to commit these thoughts to paper. All of this is so unusual and yet at the same time simple and understandable.’

The Angel smiled.

‘Write if you want to and when you finish, give me a call if you like. I really loved singing with you at the piano yesterday.’

‘Did you?’ Sue was genuinely pleased. ‘Well then, I’ll scratch down some words now and then give you a call.’

The girl hastily made her way to the gate and the Angel smiled warmly, watching her leave.

‘Yes, yes, I know! It’s always very important to listen to your parents!’ he said interrupting some commentary from above and heard a warm, cheerful laugh.

After that, he drove to the nearest restaurant to buy some dinner. It was his time to think about food finally.

The next morning, Angelo was woken up again by the ringing of his telephone. This time, it was Peter.

‘Good morning, Angelo!’ the Angel heard a familiar voice from the receiver.

‘Good day, Peter!’ he replied. ‘Is there any news?’

‘I think so,’ Peter said happily. ‘It seems that our sermon idea has worked one hundred percent. Last night, I probably answered a dozen questions from people enquiring when you were going to speak again.’

‘Not bad!’ the Angel cheered. ‘It seems we should continue on with this as it has provided such a good result.’

‘I think so too,’ Peter replied, ‘and I dared to say that you would be speaking here again.’

‘That’s a good decision! I think that giving such a speech once a month is exactly what we need.’

‘Perfect,’ Peter agreed and added, ‘I have one more thing to tell you which I forgot to mention last time.’

‘So what is it?’

‘Every now and then, I am invited as a guest speaker on a TV current affairs show. This usually involves giving a short speech or answering a few questions on a program called “Our city”. My next participation is in two days.’

‘You mean...’

‘Yes Angelo, there is no doubt you should go instead of me this time.’

‘Perhaps I should try it. Though, I need to know a bit more of what goes on there.’

‘Of course. Come over for a cup of tea when you have time and I’ll fill you in on all the details. It is really quite easy.’

‘Perfect!’ the Angel smiled and added: ‘Thank you Peter for giving me such good news first thing in the morning.’

‘Well, it is a pleasure for me – all that is happening makes me feel as joyful as a child. This world has finally started moving in the right direction.’

Angelo laughed and said good-bye to him warmly.

Being in high spirits, he went out into his yard and with a run up, he leaped into the swimming pool. The cool water quickly and completely woke him up and the Angel went back into the house. Then, he started making his plans for the day.

Somewhere under the ground ...

The annual general meeting of all dark powers “Hell 2016” took place in a deep cave. Satan was sitting at the head of the table and some 50 of the most important devils were sitting around him. They smoked a lot and sometimes fanned the smoke away with their tails. Satan listened to their reports one by one and asked some questions.

‘Your darkness!’ the first devil began to report, ‘this year after the launch of the new I-pad model, there was an increase in the time young people spent constantly looking at their monitors. Their free time decreased by seven percent. We have not had such success for a long time.’

‘Well done!’ Satan grinned. ‘But, don’t rest on your laurels, strive to make them stick to their monitors. We must shift them out of their real lives into virtual reality even more.’

He then asked the following question.

‘How is good old debauchery going?’

‘It is growing, your darkness, growing in all directions!’ the responsible devil replied. ‘Although the speed of growth has decreased slightly. The world of light managed to stuff broadcasting with a lot of programs about families and morals.’

‘I hate those *fireflies*!’ Satan’s tail slapped the table resonantly. ‘They always put sticks in the spokes of our machines! All of you who are working on this issue must intensify your efforts in the delivery of our preferred TV programs.’

Some devils nodded in agreement.

‘What is going on with divorces?’ Satan asked again.

‘They have decreased by half a percent this year,’ a big devil replied with a trembling voice.

‘How could that be?’ Satan squinted his eyes.

The responsible devil’s tail wound around the foot of the chair several times.

‘Have you forgotten how to do your job? Have you forgotten how to provoke family quarrels? If this happens again, you and your whole department will be sent to our deepest pit for one hundred years to sharpen the horns of other devils. Do you understand?’

‘Aye-aye, your darkness!’ the devil replied, trembling. ‘But the number of marriages has grown because of the homosexual ones...’

‘You should have told me that first, fool! These must grow,’ Satan’s demeanor changed from wrath to mercy and he looked at his report. ‘What is the position with honesty?’

‘It is falling, your darkness and it is falling pretty fast!’ spoke the next devil.

‘Perfect,’ Satan giggled quite pleased. ‘Your department pleases me year after year.’

He then stood up.

‘As for conflicts in the world, well done! You are helping the politicians along pretty well and inflaming conflicts, but you need to do much more. Fill them with more pride and more ambition!’

The devils nodded their heads in agreement.

‘What about the belief in God on the Earth this year?’

‘Almost down at the bottom, your darkness!’ another devil replied. ‘We are exchanging it for various trendy things. Different methods of raising spiritual energy are doing well this year and some new theories from today’s *masters of life*.’

‘Keep pushing; strive harder,’ Satan said, taking a chair. ‘Keep on seeking out new theories. We need the word *God* to be completely erased from people’s minds or at least distorted as much as possible.’

‘We will, your darkness, as much as we can, but...’ the devil looked down embarrassed, ‘it seems that a problem has arisen ...’

‘What do you mean?’ Satan’s eyes narrowed and he looked at him intently.

‘The news is that for the last month, several areas of the world have simultaneously shown a strong growth of faith in God. It seems very suspicious to me. We have not seen activity like this for a long time.’

‘You say several areas simultaneously?’ Satan’s nails were rapping on the table thoughtfully. ‘For some reason, I don’t like it either.’

He looked at an enormous devil at the end of the table.

‘Chief of internal security!’ Satan roared.

‘Yes!’ the devil jumped up.

‘Send your most sly devils immediately to those places and find out the reason for this growth.’

‘Aye-aye, your darkness!’ the devil clacked his hooves together, ‘I will do my best!’

‘Report to me, as soon as you find out anything,’ Satan said and stood up.

‘Well that is all! I declare our annual meeting closed. Everybody must come back to their jobs! Further communication will be carried out through the usual channels.’

The devils stood up from the table and headed to the exit waving their tails.

* * *

Two days later, the Angel was sitting in a local television studio preparing to answer the questions of the program host and the participating audience. As it went live on air, the presenter started speaking.

‘Good evening everyone! I am Jimmy Hopkins. You are watching “Our city”. Today we have a guest, Angelo Beninni, a preacher. Today, he replaces our regular priest, Peter.’

‘Good evening, Angelo!’

‘Good evening, Jimmy!’

‘My first question: How long have you been working in this sphere?’

‘For a very long time,’ the Angel replied with a smile. ‘However, to be completely precise, I only work in your city for about a week.’

‘What exactly will you do here?’

‘As always, I will strengthen the belief of the citizens in this city.’

‘Do you think you will succeed?’

‘Time will tell. Personally, I don’t doubt it. If you have doubts, how can you do something well?’

‘That is reasonable, Angelo,’ Jimmy smiled. ‘Then, another question for you: ‘What, in your opinion, should the disbelievers learn first of all?’’

‘You know, Jimmy, I would exchange the word *disbelievers* with *uninformed*,’ the Angel began speaking. ‘It seems to me that this word describes the current reality much better. It is a fact that people are much more educated now. With that however, it should be mentioned that they are much more overwhelmed with various problems. That is why with all that endless work, business and other interests, there is no time left to take an interest in what is important, important to themselves most of all.’

‘So, what is so important for them?’

‘Information about God and about that which is beyond the boundaries of visible earth life. Information which has been known for a long time and proven beyond any doubt to people. It is not a secret that in the course of human history there have been thousands of events which people call miracles.’

‘Thousands?’ Jimmy asked him, surprised.

‘Well, yes,’ the Angel smiled. ‘Count a lot of broad-scale events in ancient Israel, plus hundreds of miracles shown by Jesus Christ, plus several thousand miracles performed by many hundreds of saints.’

‘Umm, quite a lot indeed.’

‘As a matter of fact, all these miracles may be called doubtless proof that God can easily transcend earthly laws and direct human lives.’

‘Possibly, Angelo. What comes of this?’

‘The conclusions are very simple here,’ The Angel said and smiled. ‘Applying simple logic, it becomes quite clear that only the Creator can transcend the laws of His world. Game pieces cannot change the rules of a game. If we can accept the many thousands of miracles as proof, then we cannot doubt that there is another eternal world beyond this earthly one. All these miracles were shown to us by God as proof and everybody should be interested in this.’

‘I agree that there is a certain logic in it.’

‘If we accept this fact, then it becomes clear that eternal life beyond the boundaries of our Earth is not less, but more important to us than some seventy-eighty years of life here. Eternity is millions and millions of years so it is logical that people want to get there after their life on Earth.’

‘I need to admit that this is all quite interesting to me,’ Jimmy laughed. ‘Then, what?’

‘Then,’ Angelo smiled, ‘we begin searching for information on the rules to enter that world. We don’t have to do much, just open God’s Commandments and read them carefully. As they were the rules laid down by God himself, there cannot be other rules of entering into eternal life.’

‘Why not? There are many other opinions on that world ...’

‘But those opinions are not supported by any proof Jimmy, they are just opinions,’ Angelo replied. ‘They are like fairy tales or fantastic stories that people like reading or watching on TV sometimes. These are the opinions of different game pieces but not of the Creator of the game.’

‘Have they no proof?’

‘No convincing proof. To take a path unproven instead of a way proven many thousands of times is simply silly. Besides, God himself told people that other ways are false. That is why any interested person looking at this attentively and applying simple and sound logic will soon turn from a disbelieving person, or to be correct, an uninformed person, into a believing, informed and interested person.’

‘Hum, it is quite simple and quite logical.’

‘That is not all of it, Jimmy. Faith is definitely important but it does not determine the result. The result is determined by the work we do on our souls. As it is usually with people: you can know theoretically how to earn money or you can actually earn money. The second requires much more effort from us and of course, the same applies here. You may simply know that there is Paradise and eternal life or you may take practical steps towards it.’

‘We got it, Angelo. Could you explain to us what you mean exactly by the work on getting this eternal life of which you speak?’

The Angel smiled.

‘Well, I will start with something many people will be pleased to hear. In this life, a person should come to love, kindness, honesty and forgiveness.’

‘Why?’

‘Because in Paradise, everyone lives only with these feelings. If some person does not also live according to them, then he will be there as a stranger.’

‘Hum, interesting.’

‘In reality, there are many on Earth who talk about love. However, achieving it in practice is not as easy as it seems. For example, to learn how to truly forgive people, a person must forgive them hundreds of times. Sincere forgiveness is only achieved so. To come to honesty, a person should look at himself and should not give in to the slightest of lies, no matter what the justification. To come to freedom, a person should always remember the eternal world and not treat too seriously all he or she has in this life or what they lack. In order to get rid of all fears, a person should strengthen his or her faith more and learn to trust in God more, et cetera. This work is not simple and not quick.’

‘Yes, it all sounds rather serious.’

‘But Paradise is worth it Jimmy, and it turns out that working on yourself is the most highly paid work on Earth. No matter what we do here, no matter how we earn money, any efforts applied to the spiritual path will bring us much more.’

‘You speak brilliantly, Angelo!’ Jimmy said. ‘Simple and reassuring. We should all think this over indeed.’

At that moment, the Angel smiled and looked upwards.

‘Perhaps the brothers should sing to them a little, Father?’

‘A beautiful ending will not spoil any program!’ he heard a cheerful voice.

The Angels’ singing sounded in the studio. It was so beautiful and unusual to the human ear that Jimmy and all the television operators started turning their heads surprised.

‘Angelo, what is this?’ the surprised host asked the Angel.

‘I have no idea,’ he replied cheerfully. ‘To me, it doesn’t sound too bad though, eh?’

The devil Harry

The devil Harry was riding on an Australian road heading towards the city. His helmet headphones played his favorite *underground rap*, something which earth musicians had not quite progressed to yet. The day before, it took the devil’s witches the whole day to make him look like an ordinary person. After that, he was given clothes from a warehouse and a brand-new Harley-Davidson motorcycle.

Harry was often sent on missions to Earth and did not feel very uncomfortable there. There were even some places on Earth he had come to like along the way. The only thing Harry sorely missed on Earth was his tail. That was a handy thing! It was useful for many different purposes, like brushing flies away or flicking ash off a cigarette.

The devil noticed the road sign he was looking for and took a turn to the city. Firstly, he decided to drive around the churches to see if he could find something there. He asked the same question near each church, namely - is there a new priest here?

Doing the rounds, he eventually rode up to Peter's church and dismounted from his motorcycle.

The priest was gardening near the temple's entrance working in the flower part.

'G'day, Father!' Harry said.

'Good day, young man!' Peter replied, turning around.

'What a beautiful church! You've only recently come to serve here, haven't you? I came to this temple a couple of years ago and I recall that I saw another priest serving here.'

'You must be confusing something,' Peter smiled. 'I have been serving here for a good eight years.'

'Hum, I've probably mixed something up,' Harry scratched his head thoughtfully.

The devil decided to come closer to the priest but suddenly he felt something slightly disturbing inside himself. Being a little surprised, he took a few steps back. Something emanating from that man made him feel uncomfortable.

'Would you like to come into the church and pray?' Peter asked him.

'Oh, later,' the devil shuddered. 'Firstly, I need to take a shower and take a rest after my travel.'

‘Good then, come to us when you have had a rest. By the way, we have a new preacher speaking here once a month. If you remain in the city until the end of the month, you will not regret listening to him.’

Harry’s ears twitched in alert.

‘A new preacher? Where does he come from?’

‘He is from Italy but now he lives in our city. His name is Angelo.’

‘Angelo?’

Harry felt good luck.

‘What an interesting name. How long has he been here?’

‘For nearly a month,’ the priest smiled.

The devil was not in the slightest of doubt that he found what he needed. He had been very lucky.

‘Hum, I’ll only be staying here for a few days but I’d like very much to meet him. Could I meet him somehow? Could you tell me where he lives?’

‘Unfortunately, I can’t. He simply drives over to me here sometimes. If you give me your telephone number, I will be happy to pass it on to him. I reckon he will call you pretty quickly.’

‘Good idea! Thank you, father. Here is my business card,’ Harry said and without taking a risk of coming closer to the priest, he put the card on top of the post box next to him.

He smiled and went towards his motorcycle. Peter then approached the post box and looked at the business card, it read: 'Harry Ander, Harley-Davidson motorcycles. Motorcycles, accessories, parts.'

He then looked up thoughtfully at the visitor leaving. His intuition was telling him that it was not quite an ordinary parishioner. For eight years, Peter had seen hundreds of people and had become accustomed to seeing the simple and open behavior of Australians. Having decided that it was probably a foreign tourist tired after his trip, the priest dialed Angelo's number.

'Good day, Peter!' he soon heard a familiar voice.

'Good day, Angelo!' Peter replied warmly. 'I have just been visited by a foreign tourist who says he is staying here for only a short time and he would very much like to meet you. He left me his business card.'

'Could you tell me his number, Peter?' Angelo asked.

Having written down a name and a ten-digit number, the Angel said good-bye. Putting down his pencil, he dialed the number and waited for an answer.

'Harry Ander here,' he soon heard a harsh voice.

'Good day! My name is Angelo Beninni,' the Angel began when suddenly, the call was interrupted by some unknown high pitched shriek. He dialed the number once more, but the number was now unreachable.

Harry was leaping on one leg shaking his singed arm. The telephone was lying near him in a puddle.

‘Light me burn! What's going on here? I'll be damned,’ the devil swore completely puzzled. ‘I was nearly caught on fire from just a couple of his words.’

Gradually, Harry calmed down and began thinking. ‘Yes, I should take a photo of him and show it to the chief. It seems to be something I haven't faced before.’

Having kicked what was left of the useless mobile phone, Harry quickly walked off to his motorcycle.

* * *

Having not succeeded in calling Harry, Angelo dialed Peter's number who picked up almost immediately.

‘Listen Peter, I've just tried calling that man. I had hardly started speaking when I heard someone's shriek and no one answered after that. Have you got any idea of what is going on?’

‘I don't know what to think of it, Angelo. I saw how that parishioner began speaking on his phone, then suddenly he threw the phone away and started shaking and waving his hand as if he hurt it. I can't figure it out myself. He is rather strange.’

‘Umm, it seems I can guess what is going on,’ the Angel replied. ‘First, I'll have to find out exactly and then I will tell you.’

‘All right Angelo. I'll be waiting. Goodbye.’

The Angel went out into his yard and looked up at the sky.

‘Father! Is this what you warned us about? The guests from below?’

‘Not only with you, my dear. Rumors about you have shaken the dark world already.’

‘Yes, they seem to be in a time of trouble,’ the Angel smiled.

‘The swamp does not like to worry,’ the Father said.

‘Well, that’s the swamp’s problem.’

‘Be careful, Angel. Certainly, they are afraid of you but that will not stop them trying to hinder you by all means.’

‘Well, considering that in principle they can do nothing else...’ the Angel smiled and added, ‘thank you, Father.’

* * *

The devil Harry was standing with a pile of newspapers pretending to be a postman near the fence of Angelo’s yard. It turned out not too difficult at all to find a person with such a rare name who had just come into the city a month ago. After all, the devils’ information service worked at a high level.

At that moment, the house door began to open and Harry quickly hid himself behind a nearby tree. A tall, blond-haired man, near thirty years old walked out and headed towards his neighbor’s fence. Harry took out his camera quickly and took a few photos.

Meanwhile, the man walked past the gate and kept going to the neighbor's house, from which a blonde-haired girl appeared. Just in case, Harry took a couple more photos. Having chatted happily they disappeared into the house. The devil turned to head back to his motorcycle but his curiosity prevailed.

Having considered some possible explanations, with newspapers in hand, he lithely leaped over the low fence and carefully crept up to the house. In no time, he was sitting under a window listening intently. Although, instead of words he suddenly heard a piano playing. Harry winced. A minute later, he heard the girl singing.

‘How disgusting!’ the devil shuddered thinking about his *underground rap*.

It soon became worse as the girl's voice was joined by the voice of the young man. At that moment, Harry felt as if needles had pierced his ears.

He squeezed his hands hard against his ears in pain and rolled, wailing along the grass away from the house. Having rolled to a safe distance, he raised himself slightly, took his hands off his ears cautiously and made his way to the fence, swearing.

It was time to return home and make a full report to the chief about it. Let them figure it all out themselves.

* * *

Satan was sitting at a table, tapping his fingers furiously. The chief of security and a few of his best agents stood in front of him. All of them had just returned from earth and made their reports.

‘This means it is not a coincidence,’ he fumed angrily. ‘There are indeed fifteen “fireflies” that have come to Earth.’

‘What should we do with them, your darkness? Your orders,’ the chief of security stood at attention.

‘What can you do with them? Burn up standing near them?’ Satan groaned fiercely. After he calmed down a little, he continued: ‘We need a sly plan.’

‘Would you... let them do what they want, your darkness?’ the security chief asked with some distrust.

‘Don’t even mention it!’ Satan sneered. ‘Right, we cannot harm them but we can increase our efforts in tempting those around them. They will become almost useless without helpers...’

Satan stopped tapping his fingers and raised his head.

‘Listen to my order!’ he roared. ‘Stick five of the slyest devils to each of the *fireflies*. Let them tempt everyone in their close circle until they break off their relationship. Report to me personally on this operation.’

‘Aye!’ the chief of security clacked his hoofs. ‘I will choose the agents for this personally.’

Satan laughed.

‘We’ll see who wins...’ he said and stood up from the table.

* * *

Mike sat near his rescue station and looked attentively at people bathing in the sea. That day, the ocean was more or less calm so he did not expect problems. The young man was thinking of going to his hut to make himself a coffee when he heard a mellow voice near him.

‘Excuse me, could you spread sun-protection cream on my back?’

Mike turned around.

There lay a gorgeous blonde on a bright-red towel two meters away from him. Her almost an excuse for a bikini outlined her shape rather than covered it. With her childish trusting eyes, she blinked her long eyelashes while her blonde curly hair waved beautifully in the light wind.

Mike swallowed; it was only last week that he hardly managed to get rid of half of his girlfriends. Having thought for a moment, he stretched out his hand for a bottle of cream.

‘Of course, I will,’ he said and began spreading the cream on her suntanned body.

‘You’ve got such strong manly arms,’ he heard a sweet voice. ‘Have you saved many people here?’

‘Well, I don’t count them,’ Mike replied stammering and suddenly, remembering about everything, then he added: ‘My

friend does generally. He has got such beautiful eyes that when I see the sky reflecting in them, I forget about everything.'

In the end, he already spoke with sand. By the time he finished, the beauty picked up her towel and was moving away from him at a fast pace.

'Yes Mike, just a week ago, I'd choke you myself for that prank,' he said to himself quite agitated and even placed his hands around his neck.

He was cheered up slightly by this joke. He would have died long ago without his natural sense of humor!

* * *

Angelo having had a walk near the sea earlier was driving up to his house. He parked his car in the garage and walked over to the swimming pool. Having looked at the adjoining yard, he saw Sue working there.

'Good day, Sue!' he said loudly.

'Hello, Angelo!' the girl stood up and walked up to the fence smiling.

The Angel looked at her attentively and felt that she looked slightly different today.

'Are you okay, Sue?' he asked. 'You look a bit... how do I say this, a little preoccupied.'

‘I’m fine, Angelo, great even,’ smiled the girl. ‘I got a letter this morning.’

From the pocket of her jeans, she took out a folded paper and gave it to the Angel.

‘This letter is a job offer from a big newspaper in Melbourne,’ she explained, as Angelo unfolded it. ‘They say they like my resume and they want to hire me.’

Sue smiled.

‘I have long dreamt of working for a big newspaper somewhere near my home. It seems I’m lucky. It’s a little strange that this letter has come to me during these holidays though.’

The Angel looked attentively into the girls’ eyes.

‘It’s great when your dreams come true, except...’ he smiled, ‘it seems to me that I have come to know you a little and frankly speaking, for some reason, I wouldn’t say that you are really happy at the moment.’

‘Exactly,’ the girl smiled a little sadly. ‘It’s been a little boring here alone without my family. I miss them a lot.’

‘Is it boring now?’

‘Boring?’ the girl’s cheeks blushed. ‘Well, I forgot the word *boring* after I got my new neighbor. Haven’t I told you how well he sings?’

Angelo laughed cheerfully.

‘It seems I may have broken your plans, dear Sue. I’m really sorry.’

‘Why?’ Sue asked with surprise. ‘On the contrary, you have added bright colour to my life...’

The girl coughed.

‘I’m sorry, Angelo! I think I need some alone time to think this all through carefully.’

‘Of course!’ the Angel nodded. ‘Call me if you need me.’

The girl nodded her head and headed slowly to her house.

The Angel watched the girl go and went to his house too. Strangely, he felt a twist in his heart. This sad feeling was unfamiliar to him. A telephone call distracted him a little.

‘Hello Angelo!’ he heard Mike’s cheerful voice. ‘I report that the lad from Sydney came here and I gave him all the details. He seemed like a good guy.’

‘Great news Mike! Thank you very much!’ the Angel smiled. ‘How are you doing?’

‘I’m well now,’ the lifeguard laughed happily. ‘I’m repelling a girl’s invasion.’

‘That’s a great thing to do,’ the Angel agreed.

‘Easy to say,’ Mike whined. ‘It’s the second day in a row they’ve been lying around my booth in a circle and have been asking to spread sun cream on their back, one after another.’

‘Work hard, muscular arms are a sign of a real man,’ the Angel smiled. ‘Don’t forget to tell them what beautiful eyes your friend has got.’

‘Yup,’ Mike replied, ‘It looks like I might need to put up a poster with a photo of the friend. Have you time to visit me? I’d really like to have a chat with you about a few interesting things.’

‘Certainly,’ the Angel replied. ‘Will it be good tomorrow at lunchtime?’

‘Of course!’ the young man replied pleased. ‘Can I bring the fellow from Sydney too? I liked him.’

‘The more of us – the better,’ Angelo replied and said good-bye.

He sat down in a sun lounge deep in thought for some time. The Angel then looked up at the sky.

‘Father! Is this a coincidence? Well, you know - that assignment of Sue? So many girls around Mike?’ he asked.

‘Of course not,’ he heard a familiar voice, ‘but this is all according to rules. I’m keeping my eyes on it. People are allowed to be tempted on the earth. How else would they sort things out and become strong?’

‘Thank you for helping!’ Angelo said and came to the edge of the swimming pool.

‘Simply believe in them, my dear! Each of them has a part of me and it always prompts them on what to do,’ he heard.

‘Mike needs some help...’ the Angel smiled and jumped into the swimming pool.

‘I will think about it,’ he heard the reply flying through the air.

Jessica

Mike was sitting on the side of his booth watching the swimmers. There were nice waves that day, but there were only a few people in the water. Involuntarily, he began to keep watch over one smiling girl in particular. She was frolicking in the waves like a child, taking no notice of anything around her. Mike rarely saw someone that was so genuinely happy in the ocean. The girl dived under the waves, tried to jump over them or raced landwards with the flow of the seething white water. This continued for a long time but she did not seem to get bored or tired of it.

Smiling and looking at the uncommon spectacle, Mike suddenly became alert. At that moment, the swimmer had gone too far into the ocean and a set of large waves was approaching the shore.

The lifeguard took the megaphone that was lying next to him and called out to the girl with a warning. However, because of the noise of the breaking waves around her, she didn't hear him. Mike stood up but just at that moment, he saw a big wave engulf the girl and he could not see her anymore.

Mike grabbed his rescue buoy and quickly ran into the ocean. As always, his intuition did not fail him and when he swam up to the girl, she was barely afloat, frantically swallowing air mixed with spray. Mike quickly thrust the buoy into her hands and towed her towards the shore by the attached rope. Soon in shallow water their feet reached the sandy bottom.

The girl stood with great difficulty and Mike, seizing her in his arms, carried her to the shore. It was only after some fifteen minutes of rest that she was able to smile again.

‘I’m so sorry,’ she said, looking apologetically at Mike. ‘I think that today I played in the waves too long and caused you a lot of hassle.’

‘It happens,’ the young man smiled. ‘Next time, be careful; large waves are treacherous. Unlike us lifeguards...’

The girl laughed and held her hand out.

‘My name is Jessica. Thank you so much!’

‘Mike,’ the guy replied. ‘I’m always happy to help a young lady in trouble, especially one who loves the sea so much. I had been watching you play for about twenty minutes.’

‘It is what it is,’ Jessica smiled, casting down her eyes a little. ‘The ocean is my weak spot! I may swim all day. There’s nothing my parents can do about it.’

‘Where are they now?’

‘This time I came to the beach alone,’ the girl slightly raised her nose. ‘I’m an adult and quite independent.’

‘Are you sure?’ Mike asked her smiling and they both laughed merrily.

‘Where did you come from?’ he asked her.

‘From Canberra. This is our favorite vacation spot and my parents and I used to come here several times a year. This time, I’m here alone.’

‘Be careful, Jessica! Do not go into a rough ocean deeper than your waist. A lifeguard may not always be near.’

‘Then I’ll just swim at your beach,’ beautiful green eyes stared at Mike. ‘Well, I’ll just go for a little swim?’

‘Oh, my!’ Mike laughed. ‘You’re going to be covered with scales after spending so much time in the water!’

The girl stood up.

‘My parents keep telling me the same,’ she smiled. ‘But, as you can see...’

She turned on her beautifully slender legs and ran towards the ocean.

‘She is crazy,’ Mike thought fondly looking at her.

He never returned to the booth that day.

* * *

Angelo went on the internet and found three more letters from men who were interested in what happened on the beach. He had just managed to redirect them when his phone rang. The Angel glanced at the phone screen and smiled.

‘What would you like to do madam Sue, sing or swim?’ he asked with the voice of a professional waiter.

‘Mm... swim,’ the girl responded with the voice of a capricious client matching his tone.

‘Then I’m going to make coffee,’ responded Angelo and went into the kitchen.

When he finally went into the yard carrying two cups, his neighbor was already frolicking in the pool. There was no trace of the earlier preoccupation on her face.

‘Angelo!’ she said with playful reproach. ‘Why didn’t you tell me anything about your local television appearance? I came to find out about it by chance and had to watch a recording.’

The Angel looked at the sky and smiled at the Organizer of this miracle.

‘Yeah I simply forgot about it,’ he shrugged. ‘All our meetings are very eventful, it’s easy to forget something.’

‘I liked what I saw,’ said Sue, getting out of the pool. ‘Simple, clear and evidence-based. Perhaps just what is needed now. Can you explain what that unusual song was at the end of the show? It was very similar to those we sing together.’

‘Probably just a new trend and such songs coming to this city,’ said the Angel with a smile.

‘Anyway, you are connected with so many interesting things,’ the girl said, sitting down in the lounge. ‘I have no idea where I’ll see you tomorrow.’

‘I don’t even know that myself,’ the Angel thought.

The girl took a sip of coffee and looked into his eyes.

‘So fragrant!’ she said. ‘You seem to do everything with love.’

‘Could it be made differently?’ Angelo smiled.

‘Of course not, but sometimes it happen...’

The girl finished her coffee and put the cup on the table.

‘I made the decision about the new job offer.’

He gave her a questioning look.

‘Even if all I do is to sing songs with you for the next fifty years, I will not leave this place.’

‘Is it really possible to do something more interesting?’ the Angel smiled and they both burst out laughing.

‘It’s so much fun here!’ said Sue, catching her breath. ‘I would be very bored without you.’

‘I feel the same,’ replied the Angel seriously. ‘Today when you left, I felt pain in my heart that I wouldn’t like to experience again.’

‘What’s going on between us, Angelo? Is it what I think it is?’ asked the girl looking at him.

‘It is not going to be bigger or brighter if we give it a name,’ said the Angel. ‘I think that we just need to live by it.’

‘You know, I am going to go completely insane with you!’ screamed Sue, jumping up from the lounge and pushing the Angel into the water. ‘You talk so beautifully that the only thing I need is to listen to you. I don’t feel like a journalist but more like some kind of vegetable with ears!’

Angelo took some water from the pool into his mouth and began to gurgle it defiantly.

‘Oh, look! He's laughing at me,’ the girl smiled and jumped into the pool as well.

* * *

Mike smiled as he watched Jessica swim, when a shadow fell on the sand beside him. Sighing, the lifeguard got ready again to rub oil onto someone and retell the story of his mythical friend. However, he heard a male voice.

‘Excuse me, do you know where I can find Mike, the lifeguard?’

‘That’s me, me!’ He replied happily while turning around.

He saw a dark-haired young man of about twenty-five years old.

‘My name is Steve, Steve Rallis,’ the guy smiled and offered his hand. I got a reply on the Internet that you saw something unusual here several days ago.’

Mike smiled.

‘You've come to the right place, Steve,’ replied the lifeguard. He then spoke into the radio and asked for a substitute lifeguard while he was taking a break.

Shortly after, the young men were sitting at a table in a cafe.

‘Steve! Satisfy my curiosity, please,’ Mike started the conversation after they made their order. ‘Have you just immediately believed that something really happened here?’

‘You see, my grandparents came from Greece and I literally grew up on their stories,’ said Steve with a smile.

Mike, whose sole knowledge of Greece was that it started with the letter *G*, raised an eyebrow uncomprehendingly.

Steve laughed.

‘I guess I should explain something to you. Greece is a country where there have been a lot of saints over the past two thousand years. So basically, the Greeks are religious and know a lot about miracles and on Mount Athos, if you've heard of it, miracles still happen.’

The fellow sipped his juice and continued.

‘So, after reading about this miracle, I was not that surprised and I just decided to come here to see everything with my own eyes.’

‘Hum... You're lucky! In my own education, there was a big gap on this subject,’ Mike said.

Then he began his story, interrupted a few times, because the lifeguard was eating some of his delightful meal. When he finished, his visitor did not say anything for a long time and just sat staring at the ocean.

‘So, you say his name is Angelo?’ he asked finally after long silence and added. ‘You know, Mike, I believe you. Because for no other reason, you would not need to invent the story at all, if it simply was not true.’

Both men laughed out loud at this plain logic.

‘Mike, when can I see him?’ asked Steve with interest.

The lifeguard thought and took the phone. After a couple minutes of conversation, he looked at Steve again.

‘Actually, Angelo told me to send everyone who is interested in this to Peter, the priest, but...,’ the lad smiled. ‘I really like your logic, Steve. He promised to come and see me here tomorrow afternoon and he will be glad to see you here too.’

‘Great!’ the young man replied happily. ‘Thank you very much. In the meantime, can I have a decent swim today and tomorrow before lunch?’

‘Of course!’ Mike said merrily. ‘You can leave your things at my station. I will look after them, no worries...’

Mike smiled intriguingly at the beautiful girls around his workplace.

* * *

The next morning, Angelo first went to see Peter. The priest happily met him.

‘I saw your speech on television,’ Peter said. ‘It is exactly what people needed to hear now.’

Angelo nodded agreeably.

‘Yes, today after two thousand years, it seems that we need to explain everything all over again from the beginning.’

Peter smiled cheerfully.

‘The singing of the Angels at the end of the show was just wonderful! It caused quite a stir at the studio, right?’

Angelo laughed.

‘It seems yes, but then I quickly left. Now let them rack their brains. Maybe someone will guess.’

After that, they went inside Peter’s room and began to drink some tea.

‘Peter, I want to ask you something.’

‘I’m always ready to help you out, Angelo.’

‘Perhaps from time to time, Mike will send people to you. Remember I told you what happened on the beach?’

‘How can I forget?’ smiled Peter.

‘So, it will be those who might want to see me. Tell them when my next appearance at the church is going to be. In any event, I think you’ll find what to talk about with them.’

‘No doubt, Angelo, I’ll give them all my attention and if there are some special cases, I’ll call you.’

‘Thank you!’ the Angel smiled. ‘We should not miss anyone who comes to us.’

‘Of course, Angelo,’ replied Peter.

They drank their tea, talked for a while and then said goodbye to each other. At the doorway, the Angel turned around.

‘About that visitor, Harry. It was a messenger from hell.’

‘Honestly, that’s what I thought. I just wasn’t sure.’

‘They are all afraid of us but still be careful. They are very cunning.’

Angelo then went to his car and drove toward the beach.

* * *

That morning, Jessica came over to Mike's booth.

'Hello, Jessica!' Mike happily came over to meet her. Then he looked down at her legs. 'I see that despite yesterday, the scales haven't appeared, so you can continue bathing.'

'Good morning, Mike!' laughed the girl. 'I just wanted to thank you again for what you did yesterday. Today, I promise to be more careful in the water.'

'Lifeguards always like to hear such sensible things.'

They both smiled cheerfully.

'What do you do here in the evenings, Jessica, if it's not a secret of course?' Mike could not help asking. 'You probably go to some cool discos?'

'Well, no, I don't really like noisy places,' she said. 'Sometimes I walk, sometimes I read nice books and sometimes grab a chair on the balcony and look at the stars.'

'And they talk to you...'

The girl looked at him in surprise.

'How do you know?'

'I know. I've been talking to them for a long time too.'

‘Funny.’ she smiled. ‘What do you do when your work day’s over?’

‘Nothing special,’ Mike smiled. ‘I just bury myself in the sand and wait until next morning.’

The girl laughed loudly.

‘You’re funny,’ she looked at him. ‘If you want, we can spend this evening together.’

‘I would love to,’ Mike said without a moment’s hesitation.

‘Then I’m going to dig you out here at about 8 o’clock?’ Jessica smiled and, leaving her towel and flip-flops, made her way down to the ocean with a light step.

Mike watched her go and suddenly realized that he felt something new and unusual in his heart. It was a strange feeling, because he had so many girls and he was sure that he already knew everything about them. It turned out that he did not... Involuntarily, he suddenly remembered the words of Angelo on this subject and smiled.

‘Would you be so kind as to rub me with sunscreen?’ he heard a female voice nearby.

The lifeguard sighed. His new working day had begun.

* * *

Angelo found Mike sitting on the sand near his station. There was a blue towel on his right and a pink towel on his left.

Meanwhile, the lifeguard was looking at the bathers through his binoculars.

‘Can I sit here?’ asked the Angel as he sat down.

‘Angelo! I’m so glad to see you,’ Mike patted him on the shoulder with a big smile.

Angel looked at the blue towel beside him.

‘A guy from Sydney?’

‘Steve,’ nodded the lifeguard. ‘A good guy! Shall I call him?’

‘Let him swim, I’m in no hurry,’ smiled Angelo. ‘Let’s chat instead. I love to sit by the ocean. What’s your news?’

Mike hesitated a second then nodded at the pink towel.

‘Jessica, here,’ he was embarrassed a little and then added hastily, ‘don’t get me wrong, she’s not like that, she’s very good!’

The Angel laughed.

‘Well, only if she’s good... Anything else?’

Mike looked thoughtfully.

‘I don’t even know how to put this...’ he began, ‘I think I have begun to look at life in a different way somehow. Maybe I’ve grown up?’

‘Maybe getting smarter?’ smiled Angelo.

‘I doubt it,’ - laughed Mike. ‘I’ve been thinking about my past from time to time. I understand that I’ve done a lot of stupid things. Some of which I feel very ashamed of.’

‘Ask God for forgiveness and you will feel better,’ the Angel advised.

‘Yes, I guessed that already. I do that sometimes. Indeed, I do feel better afterwards...’

Mike took a handful of sand and let it pour out in a thin stream.

‘What do you think, Angelo, is He angry with me?’ he asked quietly.

‘He is not angry at all.’

‘How is that?’ Mike looked at the Angel in surprise.

‘He loves you, Mike! It’s you who need a beautiful and happy life in the first place and He explains how you can have it step by step.’

‘Then what does God need from me?’

‘Nothing special, really. What do we need from children? He just wants to look at his good and happy child Mike and rejoice with him.’

‘Is it good for Him?’

‘It’s always good if you love. Not many things can be better than that,’ Angelo smiled and nodded at the pink towel. ‘As in your case...’

Mike sighed.

‘Life can be at such a high level! And I just live here as some kind of male-dinosaur...’

Angelo burst out laughing.

‘I forgot to tell you that He also loves good and kind jokes,’ the Angel said laughing.

Mike finally smiled.

‘Well, at least that is a bonus for me,’ he said and looked at Angelo seriously. ‘Thank you for talking to me about it. It's important to me.’

At that moment, the slender mistress of the pink towel returned.

‘This is Jessica,’ Mike smiled and looked at his friend, ‘and this is Angelo.’

The Angel stood up and greeted her with a handshake. He was about to say something when suddenly he heard another voice behind him.

‘I haven’t swum so well for a long time!’

Angelo turned around. A young guy with a happy smile wiped his hands with a blue towel. Then he offered one of them to the Angel.

‘I'm Steve.’

‘Angelo,’ the Angel and they shook hands.

‘Then you’re the one I was looking for.’

‘Well, guys!’ Mike intervened in their conversation. ‘Maybe we can go to a cafe and grab something to eat? Then you can talk about everything. Who is up for it?’

Everyone agreed.

An extraordinary meeting of the dark forces was taking place with many the devils in complete silence. Only Satan was talking.

‘So, we now have some big problems. For hundreds of years, we have been working on dominating that our views and interests over the people on this planet. And I can say that we have been very successful, especially recently, when all these electronic devices appeared.’

Satan swept his eyes over everyone.

‘But now, the rules of the game have become complicated. These fifteen *fireflies* on Earth are not just a problem but a very big problem for us. Our first experience of dealing with them has shown us that our usual tactics won’t be of much use.’

Several devils in bandages nodded. Harry, with a bandaged ear, was one of them. Satan continued.

‘We will need all our strength and all our cunning and deceit. Otherwise, in the near future, these lights will be able to grow into such a large fire that we’ll have to stay away from them.’

Satan stood up from the table and spoke in a thunderous voice.

‘Now! I will create fifteen groups with the most experienced devils in charge. The number of devils, which they can attract, is not limited. All of them need to follow every step of these "fireflies", each thread coming from them and their every contact. You must interfere with what they do and their surroundings. You need to tempt, to corrupt, to distract, to scare... Well, you know all that. You should report to me personally on every successful

experience of this struggle with the *fireflies*. We will then study it and share it with the other groups.'

Satan came out from the desk and walked around the room looking at the devils.

'We have worked so long on the views of people. I am not about to sit back now so someone can ruin it. Let's tackle the *fireflies* well and truly, and maintain our superiority on Earth.'

All the devils jumped up in unison waving their tails. They began to shout out words in support of their chief. Satan grinned and went back to his seat.

'Well now, let's start to draw up a detailed plan of action,' he said in a calmer voice.

The devils took out paper and pencils from their bags, licked them and got ready to write.

* * *

That evening Sue and Angelo were lying on the sun lounges by the pool, looking at the stars.

'Father!' the Angel asked mentally, 'can I tell her about everything?'

'It is up to you,' he heard the answer. 'True friendship always supposes sincerity and openness.'

'Thanks,' the Angel smiled and looked at the girl. 'Oh, what's going to happen now...'

‘Sue! Before we move any further in our relationship, I have something to tell you about myself,’ Angelo began.

‘Are you married?’ Sue stared at him.

Angelo fell back on the lounge with laughter. All his seriousness suddenly evaporated.

‘Nah, it's not that serious. I'm just the Angel who will stay on Earth for the rest of his life.’

‘Ah, only that!’ Sue smiled cheerfully. ‘Well then, I probably need to make a disclosure too. In fact, I’m a well-disguised Queen of England. However, if you rub me with a sponge, you will see that actually I look a little older.’

Angelo laughed.

‘No, Sue, I’m telling the truth.’

The girl looked into his eyes and suddenly realized that he was not joking.

The thought ‘Is he crazy?’ flashed across her mind.

‘No, I'm not crazy,’ smiled the Angel. ‘Just, sooner or later, you'll see that I don't have any relatives on Earth, that I have no past. So I have to tell you about it now.’

‘Are you a spy?’ the girl's ingenuity knew no bounds. ‘Russian...’

‘And I can speak all the languages in the world.’

‘Exactly, a spy!’ the girl confirmed her supposition.

‘Ooh!’ the Angel moaned helplessly and looked up at the sky. ‘Father, help!’

At that moment, the girl's chaise longue rose about a metre above the ground and slowly floated to the center of the pool.

The girl paused and, in fear and amazement, turned her head, not believing her own eyes.

'A magician!' was her last guess.

At the same moment, the chaise longue overturned and she fell into the water. A few seconds later, Angelo saw two burning eyes at the side of the pool.

The girl stared at him in amazement.

'But can Angels get married?' softly and a little plaintively asked a female voice out of the water.

'Only with crazy journalists,' the Angel answered with a laugh and jumped towards her into the water.

An hour later, he finished telling his story.

'So, you are thousands of years old?' Sue looked at him appreciatively. 'Erm... do you mind if I don't mention that to my mom?'

'Well, it's better to keep a lot of things secret from her!' he replied laughing. 'For example, that you're my first for thousands of years...'

Sue leaned fondly towards him.

'Now many things are starting to fall into place. The water of the pool helped me to see clearly. Your extraordinary voice, your opinion on many things, your faith and sincerity. And your rare name...'

‘The singing walls in your house, the singing of angels on TV...,’ Angelo helped her to remember.

The girl suddenly pulled back and looked into his eyes.

‘One thing I just do not understand is why God placed you next to me?’

Angelo looked up at the sky.

‘I’ll ask Him,’ he said, and after a second replied: ‘Well, He basically tells me about some sort of medallions a la Australian. But, your kindness, honesty and cheerfulness helped a little too...’

The end of his detailed speech was brutally silenced by a kiss.

PART TWO

Beninni family

Angelo quietly slipped out from under the blanket and tiptoed out of the bedroom, silently closing the door behind him. He went into the kitchen, made coffee and sat down at the breakfast bar. Everywhere around him there were greeting cards which began with the words: *Dear Angelo and Sue!* or *Congratulations, Mr. and Mrs. Beninni!*

The Angel smiled looking at them and then began to look out of the window at green grass and floating clouds. After a few minutes, gentle and warm hands hugged him from behind.

‘Good morning, honey!’

‘Hey!’ Angelo smiled. ‘How did you sleep?’

‘Wonderful!’ Sue replied and stretched out. ‘Well, finally the wedding is over, guests and parents have left and now we can just move on.’

She sipped coffee from Angelo’s cup, sat down beside him and wrapped herself with a blanket.

‘What are we going to do now?’ she asked after some time looking at her husband with interest.

‘Well, I guess the same as we did before,’ the Angel shrugged.

‘Oh, no!’ Sue replied with a smile. ‘I was just a neighbor of one lovely and eloquent Italian, but now I’m the wife of an angel. Of course, my life must be devoted to ensuring that I help him in everything. Besides, it’s very interesting to me!’

‘Well, only if you’re interested,’ Angelo laughed and hugged her gently, ‘then your help is likely to be very useful to that chatty Italian guy.’

‘Angie! What could be more interesting for me than the incredible fairy tale that suddenly became a reality in my life?’ Sue was sincerely surprised. ‘Besides, it is a very beautiful fairy tale ...’

The Angel was smiling silently, gently stroking her hair. After some time, Sue turned to him again.

‘Honey, if it's not a secret, please tell me something I need to know for a start.’

‘There have never been any secrets,’ said Angelo. ‘Beyond this visible world, there is God Who created it. He is love and goodness itself. I love Him very much. He gave this world to people so that they could live in it with the right principles and learn to always be kind and loving. After death, everyone who lived in that way would be able to come into His eternal home. They would live there among the same kind of people – good, sincere and loving.’

‘How simple and beautiful...’

‘The Father knows no other way. But in this world, in addition to kindness and love, there is also evil and hatred, lies and greed and so on. They also must be here because people need to learn to choose between good and evil. If you are surrounded only with good things, such a choice would be impossible. Evil has no real power on Earth. It can only deceive, hate and scare.’

‘The devils in the movies that I’ve watched were quite powerful.’

‘That is another lie,’ Angelo smiled. ‘People need to extract information not from movies but from what was said to them by God, His Son and the saints on this earth. All the dark forces or the devils, as you call them, could never control people but they have other ways to influence people and lead them to darkness.’

‘Thoughts?’

‘Yes, they can send bad thoughts. So for example, if the idea to steal something comes into the mind of a person and he doesn't

do it, he remains clean. But if the person steals or does some other bad deed, then evil becomes attached to him. It is like liana in the forest entwine tree. Sin inside a person puts him in the territory of the dark forces. They can affect him more through it. It is no secret that stealing for the second time is always easier than for the first time. So, devils pull sinful people by these threads, requiring them to commit more and more sins and with each bad thing they do, these threads become thicker and stronger.'

'Interesting,' Sue said. 'How can someone get rid of these threads?'

'Very easy. To do it, he should deeply and sincerely repent for his bad deeds, then the Lord will cut these threads. After that, a person should try very hard not to repeat the same mistakes.'

'Hum, it's so simple and clear! Are there many threads binding people today?'

'A lot,' Angelo replied. 'The dark forces first tied people with irritation, or anger, or deceit and that was long ago. Envy, greed, jealousy, etcetera are also very common among people now. So, if the person is tangled up in all these threads, the dark forces already heavily control him. Although, the Lord does not let evil to do more than permitted as people should always be able to see their sinfulness at any time and turn to the light and goodness.'

'And what about kind and sincere people on Earth?'

'They also exist. They are the beloved children of the Father and He looks after them with special attention. They try their best not to succumb to their passions, forgive their abusers and retain easiness and joy in their heart. We must look for these people first

and reach out to them. From them, goodness can rapidly spread to others.'

'Why can't the devils reach you for example?'

'They will burn,' the Angel smiled. 'The light in this world always dispels darkness and they are like darkness. Also, they are very uncomfortable near good and sincere people.'

'It is so interesting!' said Sue. 'A few weeks ago, I couldn't even imagine how the world actually looks in reality.'

'Are you pleased?'

'Very!' the girl smiled. 'I have discovered so much... Many of my previous visions of the world can be simply thrown on the scrap-heap.'

'I think a lot of your abilities will actually be very useful for us,' Angelo smiled.

Sue looked at her husband.

'Did you come to the Earth alone?'

'No. Fifteen of us arrived in fifteen different countries.'

'Wow!' Sue was surprised and suddenly looked slyly at her husband. 'Have any of them got married yet?'

Angelo looked at the sky cheerfully.

'I'm the second,' he replied with a smile after a moment. 'The first one got married in Russia. Well, it's cold there now...'

Sue laughed cheerfully and cuddled up to her husband.

‘My life has changed so quickly and has become so much more interesting! Do you think I can do something for you?’

‘We will both ponder on that sometime soon,’ the Angel replied smiling. ‘In the meantime, your delicious food helps enormously in creating my good mood.’

‘Only food?’ Sue smiled slyly. Dropping the blanket, she tenderly embraced her husband.

Angelo only mumbled something in response - it was hard to answer while he was being kissed. In a little while, he began to get ready to go out.

‘Are you going to the city, Angie?’ Sue asked him.

‘Yes, I will check on Peter.’

‘Well if you don’t mind, I’ll just have a lounge around at home today. The wedding was a huge trial for me.’

‘Of course honey,’ the Angel smiled, kissed his wife and walked out to his car.

* * *

‘Angelo, I’m so happy to see you!’ Peter said, walking out to meet his friend with a smile.

‘Good morning!’ Angelo smiled. ‘Aren’t you tired of us yet? First the wedding and now here I am again.’

‘What are you talking about? How can good news and lovely friends possibly be tiresome?’ the priest laughed, ‘How's Sue? By the way, I liked her very much.’

‘She’s at home now,’ the Angel smiled warmly. ‘She is eager to help me.’

‘It's nice when husband and wife love the same thing and so useful!’

‘I agree,’ the Angel nodded. ‘This morning I was telling her about how the dark world can really affect people. To put it mildly, she grew up on not the most accurate information from the films about this.’

‘I'd like to hear your story on this topic as well,’ said Peter with interest. ‘Of course, I know many things already, but wouldn’t mind learning more. It’s a serious question.’

‘No problem,’ Angelo smiled and recounted briefly his morning conversation with Sue.

When he was done, Peter was still silent.

‘What an accurate comparison, Angelo,’ he finally began. ‘Everything is so clear and comprehensible. I think you should talk about this subject in your next sermon. They now live in expectation of some sort of triple six or something like that. They almost pay no attention to the real presence of Satan in their daily lives in the form of sins and passions.’

‘Okay, I will talk about that then,’ nodded the Angel. ‘Do you have any news?’

The priest hesitated for a moment and then handed him a piece of paper from the table.

‘I’ve just got an offer...’

Angelo took the paper and read it carefully. It was an offer to Peter for a new position as a priest at one of the largest churches in Sydney.

‘Interesting,’ the Angel said and looked at Peter, ‘and what do you think about this?’

The priest smiled.

‘It’s good that you told me earlier about the temptation of Mike the lifeguard and about the job offer to your wife. Something tells me that this paper comes from the same place.’

‘You think so?’

‘Yeah,’ Peter nodded. ‘Although, it's not important now. A few months ago, I would have gladly accepted it but now I wouldn't trade my place for the highest post imaginable.’

Angelo laughed.

‘Is it really that interesting?’

‘Yes, you know I won't be able to live in a new place without Angels’ singing,’ Peter smiled cheerfully. ‘By the way, Sue invited me to your family dinner and also to listen to your joint concert.’

‘A concert is a bit of an exaggeration but we are always happy to see you Peter!’

‘Well,’ the priest smiled happily, ‘where else can I serve the Lord in such a good and wonderful way, if not next to you?’

‘Thank you!’ the Angel warmly put his hand on Peter’s shoulder. ‘Your help is very important to us. Can you decline this offer without any problems?’

‘Already did,’ Peter smiled. ‘My consideration on this subject this morning took less than ten seconds.’

The priest and Angelo laughed cheerfully.

‘Well then, let's not forget about the songs as well,’ the Angel said. ‘If it’s okay, we expect you to drop by today. About eight o’clock, ok?’

‘With pleasure,’ Peter nodded.

After that, they had some tea and said goodbye until the evening.

* * *

Hook, Spitz and Harry were from a distance observing the meeting of the Angel and the priest in the church. Spy equipment of the latest generation helped them to hear every word.

‘Light me burn!’ cursed Spitz. ‘They guessed about the letter.’

‘The boss will be displeased with this,’ Harry drawled meaningfully. ‘He will be terribly displeased...’

‘Shut up! Anyway, the place where I used to have a tail has been itching since this morning. That is always a very bad sign,’ mumbled Hook.

‘We urgently need to think of something. We need to succeed somewhere at least,’ Harry looked at his companion devils with hope.

‘There are no real options except Nick. He is Mike’s friend and a big fan of weed.’ Spitz began to think out aloud.

‘Then let’s immediately focus on him.’ said Hook who was the leader of this group. ‘You, Spitz, organize their meeting at the bar tonight and you, Harry, make sure that Nick has a big batch of bad weed.’

His companions nodded.

‘Well, I’ll arrange that they meet a couple of bad girls,’ Hook smiled somewhat slyly and continued, ‘and maybe it will be possible to arrange something else as well ...’

* * *

That evening, Mike was sitting in the bar with his old friend Nick.

‘Yeah man, it’s so good that you called me!’ he said smiling as he sipped on his beer. ‘How long has it been since I’ve seen you?’

‘Probably about two or three years,’ pondered Nick, ‘since about the time when I left work as a lifeguard.’

‘Wow, how are things going now?’

‘Okay as always,’ shrugged Mike’s friend. ‘Still looking for my place in the world. Trying to work here and there. How are you doing?’

‘I’m about the same as usual. I still work here and when I have free time, I sail the ocean on my small yacht.’

‘Girls are probably still crazy about you?’ Nick smiled, emptying his glass then ordered another beer.

‘Yup, that’s true,’ nodded Mike. ‘but I’m not so interested in them anymore.’

‘Come on buddy!’ doubted Nick. ‘You’ve always been in expert on this subject.’

‘I was,’ smiled Mike, ‘but now, I sort of want a more serious relationship.’

‘Do you have anyone in mind?’

‘Yeah, kinda. Just taking the first steps.’

‘Wow! We need to drink something a little stronger for that,’ said Nick and ordered rum and coke.

An hour later, they both were sitting on the bench next to the bar and talking about the past.

‘Ah, by the way,’ said Nick, then he suddenly began to whisper, ‘wanna smoke some weed? I’ve got some really good stuff.’

‘Nah, I’m really not into that kind of thing,’ Mike began to resist drowsily.

‘Come on, man,’ Nick persuaded him. ‘We haven’t seen each other for ages. Let’s fire up this evening and hang out to the max.’

‘Well, I actually have a day off tomorrow,’ Mike began to waiver and finally agreed. ‘Ok, show me what you’ve got.’

They then moved away from everyone and shared a joint. When they came back to the bench, there were two girls sitting there laughing. The guys remembered that they had seen them earlier at the bar.

‘It’s destiny!’ Nick said and turned to the girls and invited them for a drink at the bar.

The girls agreed with pleasure and they again moved to the bar. After a couple of hours, the two men had cozied up with the girls and had their arms around them. Nick hinted that he has something cooler than booze which aroused their interest. After the second joint, Mike felt that he was losing complete control.

With his arms around one of the girls, he came back to the bench and just flopped down onto it. His new acquaintance had her arm around his neck. Mike could barely look up but the last thing he remembered that evening was the look on Jessica’s face who stood in front of him looking at him.

* * *

Peter arrived at Angelo's and Sue's house at eight o'clock sharp. That time, he was dressed as a typical Aussie - in jeans and a t-shirt. On his head was a wide-brimmed hat. The Beninni couple greeted him warmly at the doorway.

'Angelo, I have good news,' said the priest with a smile. 'Today, Jim Hopkins from the show called me and said that your last performance has created a lot of positive feedback.'

'Not bad,' smiled Sue.

'Yeah, that sounds great,' agreed Peter. 'He asked whether you would mind appearing on television more often, when they have gaps in the program?'

'Really good news,' said Angelo. 'TV has a huge audience. This is a good way to reach many people. Tell him I agree.'

'Great,' smiled Peter.

They sat on the veranda of the house where Sue had already set a beautiful table. During the course of dinner, they struck up an interesting conversation.

'Peter,' Sue addressed the priest. 'If it's not a secret, how did you choose your profession? Did you always want to become a priest?'

'Not at all! You'll be surprised because at first I didn't even consider it,' he laughed. 'Although, I've always wanted to help people. With that in mind, I first graduated from a medical university and even managed to work as a doctor for a while.'

'Really?' the girl was surprised. 'So you're a doctor? How interesting! And why did you decide to become a priest?'

‘Well, when I was a child, my parents brought me up with a pretty strong faith in God. My mom was especially religious. But that still wasn’t enough for me to make such a choice.’

‘What helped you then?’ Angelo asked him with interest.

‘Two of my patients from the intensive care unit where I worked,’ Peter thought remembering. ‘Both cases happened at different times but were very similar to each other. I talked a lot with those patients when they began to feel better and they told me about what they had seen being on the verge of death.’

‘What did they see?’ asked Sue.

‘Light, dazzling white light. They both experienced a feeling of incredible lightness, joy and neither of them wanted to return into their bodies. One of those patients saw a beautiful face, who told him with a smile: *No, it’s not your time yet.*’

‘That is our world,’ said Angelo smiling.

‘Did you ever meet the souls of people from intensive care when you were there?’ asked his wife with interest.

‘No. We have other Angels who deal with them. Communication with these patients is very important because this is a good opportunity to convert them to the faith and this is exactly what happens very often. And sometimes...’ the Angel looked merrily at Peter, ‘sometimes it is possible to convert even their doctors and friends.’

Everyone at the table laughed cheerfully.

‘After that,’ the priest continued his story, ‘I realized that I should help people on a more important issue – the issue of healing their souls.’

‘How interesting this is!’ said Sue with gleaming eyes.

‘For sure,’ agreed Peter. ‘It is a pity that today many people consider Christianity to be something boring when really, it is the basis of everything beautiful, enlightened and interesting in life!’

The priest finished his coffee and looked at the couple.

‘I hope you don’t think of me being a rude guest, but would you sing a little?’ he asked with a smile. ‘I would really love to hear you sing.’

‘Of course,’ Sue said. ‘Singing is one of our most favorite pastimes!’

They then all headed to Sue’s house, which had now become something of a music conservatory.

Harry, the devil who at that time was eavesdropping on their conversation, prudently began to turn down the volume of his headphones to zero...

* * *

When Mike opened his eyes, he felt as though there were a hundred little needles stirring in his head.

‘Oh, my!’ was all he could utter.

Slowly, he twisted his neck around and realized that he was lying in his rescue booth. This news pleased him greatly. Mike put his hand under the bed and pulled out a can of coke which he then drained immediately.

His memory slowly began to return to him and as it did, his desire to sink into the ground and disappear got stronger.

‘Jess...’ he moaned as he recalled the face of the girl he loved and her expression when she saw him yesterday with the other girl.

Mike groaned a little bit more, then pulled his phone from his pocket and began to type an SMS with rubbery fingers.

‘Jessica, forgive me! I’m a total idiot! I need only you!’ Then he pressed the *send* button.

‘Can I hear that out loud now?’ a female voice sounded near his booth in a second.

‘Jess?!’ murmured Mike in astonishment and leaned out of the door.

In the rays of the dawn sun, a girl was sitting on the bottom step of the stairs and was looking at him with a cheerful smile.

‘Hello, Jessica!’ Mike muttered happily. ‘What are you doing here?’

‘Nothing special. I was dragging a lifeguard from the abyss of the bar last evening,’ Jessica laughed with her eyes. ‘That abyss consisted of beer, rum, girls and it seemed to me, some other stuff if I understood the drunken mutterings of a lifeguard correctly.’

‘Oh, no!’ Mike groaned. ‘You’ve seen it...’

‘Well, yeah,’ laughed Jessica. ‘That lifeguard was hanging on to all the girls on the way, including me of course.’

‘Oh, sorry, Jessica! I’m a total idiot ...’

‘That’s okay. The latter was bearable. You were not a complete idiot, just a drunken idiot and I think you were as high as a kite. Am I right?’

‘You’re right,’ Mike looked at the floor. ‘We smoked some yesterday.’

‘Tell me honestly, are you seriously addicted to this?’ asked Jessica looking intently at the guy.

‘No, no, of course not!’ smiled Mike. ‘Last time I tried it was about four years ago and I got drunk as well.’

‘Good news,’ the girl sighed with relief. ‘I was seriously worried about you.’

The guy looked at her fondly.

‘Thank you for everything, Jess!’

‘You’re welcome. You saved me, too! How could I leave you there drowning?’ smiled the girl.

‘So, our score is one to one now?’ asked Mike.

‘No way. Two to one!’ exclaimed Jessica. ‘Do you know how heavy you are? If you didn’t keep telling me at times that you loved me, I’d have dropped you somewhere on the lawn.’

The girl looked at the guy curiously.

‘And those words? Was that a side effect of the weed?’

‘No,’ Mike looked sincerely into her eyes. ‘They are the result of the best luck in my life!’

‘You're probably still drunk,’ the girl said warmly, then she stood up and gently looked at him. ‘Have a proper sleep, Mike, and I will come over in the late afternoon, if you like.’

‘I would really like that,’ Mike swallowed, ‘and thank you, thank you for being so kind and good.’

‘Say thanks to my parents,’ the girl smiled, waved at him and went down the road.

Hook, the devil, who was looking at them from some distance through his binoculars, involuntarily began to scratch the place where he used to have a tail...

Magazine

‘Angie, what do you think: where can I be of the best help to you?’ Sue asked, giving her husband a loving look.

This morning, the young couple were having breakfast on the veranda of their house.

‘This wish first of all, should awaken an echo in your heart,’ the Angel smiled. ‘This is the only way God can make it clear to you that it is really yours.’

‘I'm trying to listen to myself, honestly,’ Sue laughed, ‘but so far, I only know for sure what I don't want.’

‘And what is that?’ Angelo looked at his wife with interest.

‘Well, I do not want to be a journalist at my newspaper anymore. There, I have certain limitations which don't allow me to speak on the topics that interest me these days.’

‘Actually, it is probably so,’ the Angel nodded, ‘but at the same time, you are a wonderful journalist and you like your profession a lot.’

‘Yeah,’ Sue sighed. ‘So you feel it too? What should I do then?’

‘I don't know,’ the Angel looked at the sky with one eye. ‘Well, maybe you can try organizing your own business? For instance, open your own information website or a small magazine.’

‘A magazine?’ Sue gave her husband a surprised look, ‘but that would be a serious investment, Angie.’

‘So who said we don't have the money?’ her husband smiled at her. ‘Father will help us in any good business!’

‘A magazine!’ the girl asked with a completely different intonation. ‘I like that! The scale here is just what I need. And what do I call it?’

Angelo laughed.

‘How can I name your magazine? Only a parent should give a name to their child ...’

‘You’re right,’ Sue agreed.

Her eyes lit up as she looked happily at her husband.

‘Well, now I am really interested, Angie!’

‘Good, that means it's yours,’ replied the Angel and smiled gratefully looking at the sky.

‘You’re welcome, but it’s not final. Now, she will keep you awake half of the night thinking about the name,’ the dear cheerful voice told him.

‘How will I sleep now before I come up with the name of the magazine?’ the pensive voice of his wife echoed.

The Angel covered his smile with his hand.

‘And by the way, what should I write about?’ Sue continued thinking out loud.

‘Well, I might be able to help you out there a bit,’ Angelo replied. ‘Fifteen Angels came down to Earth and you can be sure that soon, various miracles shall begin to happen all over the world. I will ask them to send us all the information. You can also write about some of the old miracles or just something interesting and kind.’

‘Oh!’ Sue exclaimed. ‘Then, maybe I'll name the magazine *In the world of miracles*?’

Angelo looked at the sky suspiciously.

‘Well, why suffer for half a night ...’ he heard a caring voice.

‘That’s a great name,’ the Angel approved of his wife’s choice. ‘So be it. Now, let’s take a walk along the beach together?’

‘With you – anywhere,’ Sue came close to her husband and gently hugged him from behind. ‘Thank you Angie, for such an exciting twist in my work!’

‘It’s you who I need to thank for wanting to help me!’ the Angel replied.

* * *

Devils Hook, Spitz and Harry were moodily walking to their boss along the roads of their native hell. Everything around them was dark, dirty and the smell was just like the surroundings. However, it did not bother them much — home was home.

Around the road, there were walking, sitting or lying creatures which once were people on earth. They looked different now. They did not have their human bodies. Their new body shapes corresponded fully to the character they had had by the end of their earthly life.

It was clear that people with good and kind nature did not come here. The appearance of all the creatures around them ranged from unpleasant to disgusting, for the people of the Earth of course. However, the locals had gotten used to their new appearance a long time ago.

All of them were grumbling at each other, swearing, sometimes even fighting. Those who were once greedy tried to collect something for themselves out of pure habit, but could not take anything now. Former seductresses and womanizers were trying to seduce someone without any understanding why – they

did not have their usual bodies. However, they could not think of anything else. Alcoholics suffered here without drinking, drug addicts without a dose and gluttons without food.

There were no friendships in hell. From time to time, these creatures gathered in groups to judge someone or even give someone a good beating and then often swapped places. There was no trace of love. They were only driven by hatred, pride, greed, deceit and lust.

There were a lot of creatures like that there. Some of them had arrived two thousand years ago and some very recently.

They were all scared of the devils and preferred not to stand in their way. That is why Hook, Spitz and Harry were able to quickly reach their destination and entered the cave of their group chief. His name was Crocky. He was a very angry, big, hairy bully and incredibly sly.

‘So, my darlings,’ with a cunning smile, Crocky addressed the devils, ‘what good news are you going to please your poor chief with today?’

‘We’ve made a few attempts chief,’ Hook started to report. ‘One of them almost succeeded.’

‘Almost succeeded, you are saying?’ slowly and spitefully Crocky asked once again, went to the corner of the cave and picked out a big stick. ‘That is brilliant! Tell me my darlings, what should I do to make you get rid of this nasty word *almost* in your next report? Would you please tell poor Crocky?’

Ten minutes later, the three devils were limping out of the chief’s cave.

‘What is the world coming to with these *fireflies*,’ Hook was cursing while kicking some sluggish hell inhabitant out of the way. ‘I haven’t been kicked for almost two hundred years. Now you see what happens...’

That same minute, Crocky was sitting at the table and scratching his horns. He believed in his own omens which were predicting a bad future for him. In an hour, he was supposed to report to Satan...

* * *

The next day, the Angel again was on local television as Jimmy Hopkins’ guest. During the first ten minutes, they discussed the meaning of the Gospel precepts in human daily life.

‘Yes Angelo, that is so,’ Jimmy continued their discussion, ‘but still people treat the strict principles of Christianity with caution. In the world today, there also exists other ethics in the form of free society laws.’

‘You are saying strict? I don’t think so. I would call them the most beautiful rules for human relationships on earth,’ the Angel smiled.

‘The most beautiful rules? That’s an interesting point of view. Would you please explain that to me?’

‘Sure Jimmy. Let’s take the case when other people apply these precepts to us,’ Angelo said. ‘For example, do you like it when your friends and loved ones are honest and faithful to you, when you can rely on and trust them your whole life?’

‘Hmm,’ the host thought. ‘Absolutely, yes.’

‘Well that is in fact a real application of the precepts. Would you like it if someone tried to understand and forgive you when you were wrong or have made a mistake?’ the Angel smiled.

‘I definitely like it, Angelo!’ Jimmy laughed. ‘It seems that I am starting to get what you are saying.’

‘Exactly,’ the Angel said. ‘Everyone is always happy to accept Christian principles when it concerns themselves...’

‘But following them themselves...,’ the host continued his thought with a smile.

‘Yes, yes,’ the Angel nodded, ‘that’s when they start to seem strict and excessive. In reality, they only reflect the possible attainable height of human relationships.’

‘I have never looked at this question from that angle. That’s very interesting!’ Jimmy smiled. ‘Why did I consider them excessive before?’

‘That’s exactly the problem - not knowing something, we start to rely on some individual sensations or other immature opinions instead of facts. In the end, we ourselves miss out an important and useful part of our lives.’

‘Yeah, I never thought God’s precepts could show the possible height of human relationships,’ said Jimmy thoughtfully.

‘God only told us about the relationships that exist in Paradise beyond the earthly world. He invited people to live using those rules. In this way, they would become happier in their lifetime and would feel comfortable among those others after it - among

those who live by the laws of love and kindness, forgiveness and hope forever.'

'I like what you're saying Angelo, I understand that,' the host said and then glanced at his watch. 'However, we have no more time left. I hope we'll see you again soon! But for now, we say good-bye to Angelo Beninni, who was our guest today, and thank him for an interesting discussion.'

'Thank you too, Jimmy!' the Angel smiled back.

* * *

The next day, Angelo and Sue were walking at sunset along the shore of the ocean. Soft waves were rolling on to a sloping sandy beach and the young couple were walking ankle-deep in the water barefoot. The sun was sinking slowly towards the horizon and illuminating the coast and trees with a reddish light.

'Angie, I've wanted to ask you about something. Do you think that the world still has a chance to wake up and turn back to the most important things - love, sincerity and God?'

Angelo smiled.

'I can only say that I know the One who doesn't doubt about that.'

'You mean the Lord?' Sue guessed.

'Yes, the Father. He never stops hoping for the best, even when we Angels get sad sometimes.'

‘May I ask why He has such a strong belief? Isn’t the existing reality very far from any sort of optimism?’

‘Because He is the Father and people are His children. He loves them with all His heart and believes in the strength of their kindness. If Father does not have hope, who will?’

‘He believes no matter what?’

‘Yes, that’s Him.’

‘Angie, is it good or bad that the world today is so super-technological?’

‘That can be both. Information channels are like blood vessels that run to the human soul. They can be filled with something that will either revive or destroy the soul. There is such a fairy tale about living and dead water. Only one thing is certain – all of the processes in humanity are going tens or even hundreds of times faster than they used to.’

‘I’ve read that tale,’ Sue smiled. ‘But how did people lose the most essential things in their life?’

‘Many teachers of Christianity are to blame. They sometimes terribly distorted the sense and the essence of Christianity,’ the Angel sighed sadly. ‘Tell me how simple people could possibly believe that God is love, if in His name the inquisition in Europe killed thousands of innocent women?’

‘Yes! I created them and put in a lot of effort but these wise man apparently found the source of all their troubles!’ he heard the voice from above.

‘And how much violence was supposedly committed for His good? It seems that those *Christians* didn’t read anything at all about what the Lord told them,’ the Angel continued.

‘Yes, I heard about it. It’s terrible.’

‘There are far too many examples of such distortions in the Christian world. They created the wrong image of the Lord in the minds of ordinary people: the image of a violent and vindictive but not a loving God,’ Angelo looked at his wife. ‘As a result, His important words, the words of His faithful apostles and followers were discredited by the actions of many pseudo-Christians. Now, people have a much weaker belief in the perfect image of love and kindness that God really is.’

‘What can be done to improve the situation, Angie?’

‘That’s not so easy, especially because the majority of people have already lost any interest in Christianity. Although, one shouldn’t lose hope and we need to talk and talk more with people.’

The Angel smiled for the first time.

‘In the end, it is the people themselves that need it most. Luckily nowadays, they are very open and highly educated. If it is explained to them and they are provided with indisputable facts, then some things may become clear to them.’

‘My magazine might come in useful here.’

‘Absolutely! Because the miracles that were and the ones that will happen are all facts proving the existence of God and Paradise. It also means that only Love and nothing else rules

beyond this world. These facts will make people think and lead them to the right path in life.'

Sue smiled happily.

'What an interesting and grand project I am involved in!'

'Yes darling,' the Angel laughed, 'trust me, there is nothing grander in the whole world.'

At these words, Sue gave Angelo a wily look.

'Well, only a ride on the back of a real Angel can be compared to that...' she said as she jumped on her husband's back.

The Angel picked up her legs, laughing, and carried wife.

* * *

Satan was pacing around the table where fifteen of the most prominent witches were seated.

'I gathered you all today, my dear witches, to assign you a mission. My devils didn't have much success even after a month of battle with fifteen Angels. If it continues like this, we can lose this battle very easily. Even though the devils are numerous, they are too unimaginative and fat-headed.'

The witches passionately started nodding their heads in agreement.

'So, I figured that what we need here is a woman's style.'

Pleased giggling was heard at the table.

‘I appoint you to make further plans in all the groups. Bring in more cunning, use your favorite tricks – gossip, accusations, seduction, slander and so on. Well, you know it well yourselves...’

The witches smiled understandingly.

‘Create conspiracies around the Angels’ helpers until they are out of your way. The groups of devils will obey and carry out your every order.’

Satan’s eyes twinkled with anger as he looked at a couple of broken sticks in the corner of the room.

‘I made it clear to them this morning. So, put on your most seductive look, take everything you need and report to me personally on even the smallest success that you have. We must urgently utilise any positive experience in the fight against *fireflies* to make further plans of action. Does anybody have any questions, my sly foxes?’

‘Your incomparable darkness!’ one hard-boiled witch stood up. ‘Give us luxury convertibles please. It works very well on earth. Well and, of course, the appropriate clothes.’

Satan grinned.

‘You can go to the garage and take the convertibles. Moreover, each of you can have a suitcase with the best clothes and cosmetics from the storage room. Any more questions?’

Everyone kept silent.

‘Let’s set to work then. We’re going to show these *fireflies* what real underground witches are.’

The Yacht “Storyteller”

The next day, Mike took the day off to take Jessica sailing on his yacht. The young couple with bags full of food and drinks walked on to the pier and up to a small white sailboat named *Storyteller*.

‘What an interesting name your yacht has,’ Jessica said and looked at Mike with a smile. ‘Does it mean anything?’

‘Oh no!’ the guy laughed. ‘It already had this name when I bought it. But I like it: when I was a boy I liked reading fairy tales, especially with a happy ending.’

‘Me too,’ Jessica smiled.

They loaded the boat with their provisions and untied the mooring lines after Mike started the engine. Soon, their small yacht was slowly leaving the port and making its way into a wide channel. Here, the young man hoisted a beautiful white sail, turned off the engine and the yacht drifted slowly along the calm bay towards the ocean.

‘It’s so beautiful here!’ Jessica said emotionally, looking around. ‘For some reason, the world is perceived differently from the water.’

The guy looked at the girl with interest.

‘You have, in fact, just repeated my favorite phrase,’ he said with a smile. ‘I ceased to be surprised by this a long time ago and started accepting it as just a pleasant miracle.’

They both laughed merrily.

Mike turned the boat and picked up a tailwind. He walked up to the front of the yacht and quickly hoisted another sail called a spinnaker. As it filled with air, they began to pick up speed, floating quickly on small waves.

‘It’s so strange,’ Jessica was surprised. ‘On one hand, it’s clear from the waves that the wind is quite strong but on the other hand, I don’t feel it at all on the yacht.’

‘It is completely normal,’ Mike laughed. ‘It’s because we are now moving downwind close to wind speed hence why we don’t feel the wind at the moment.’

They passed through a wide channel into the open ocean where the waves were now much bigger. Mike, having checked with Jessica in advance that she did not suffer from sea sickness, steered the yacht so that it was jumping through the waves, sometimes turning the yacht away from the water spray.

Having played enough in the ocean, they brought the yacht into a lagoon in one of the offshore islands and anchored to have a little snack and to take a swim around the yacht. The water around them was so transparent that the bottom could be seen clearly. Near their yacht swam a lot of colorful fish and they even saw a sea turtle pass by a few times.

Mike and Jessica donned masks and swim fins, swam around the yacht peering into the underwater world. Every now and then, Jessica showed Mike something interesting by pointing at it with her finger, and tried to speak with a snorkel in her mouth. Mike

just smiled at her, making funny sounds, and good-naturedly poked fun at her.

Finally, having had enough snorkeling, they got back on board of the yacht and laid under the sun to warm up and dry off a little. Mike turned on some soft music and they lay side by side enjoying a beautiful melody and the sounds of the sea.

‘I could lay like this for my entire life, I guess,’ Jessica said finally.

‘I had similar thoughts,’ Mike smiled, ‘when I bought this yacht.’

They laughed. Mike turned and looked into her eyes intently.

‘Doesn’t it feel strange to you Jess that we often have very similar thoughts on a lot of things?’

‘No,’ she said with a smile. ‘It makes me happy. It's not often that I can talk to someone in this world about what I'm really interested in.’

‘Yes, it’s rare for me too,’ Mike nodded and then added. ‘If you like, we can spend time together more often. How do you feel about that?’

‘Well, I don’t think a lot,’ Jessica replied with a laugh, ‘but I’m just getting you out of places where, in my opinion, there is no reason for you to be. It means I say yes.’

They both laughed and soon were swimming in the sea again.

* * *

Jimmy Hopkins left the television studio building and went out to the street. He started walking down the sidewalk in the direction of his home. As it usually took just a little more than twenty minutes, Jimmy chose not to use a vehicle and preferred to maintain a healthy lifestyle.

But this time his usual walk was quickly interrupted. Jimmy had hardly managed to take a couple of hundred steps when he heard the noise sound of a racy car engine right nearby. He turned his head towards the roadway and no longer wanted to turn it back.

A bright red *Ferrari* convertible with an open roof was parking in a spot right next to him. Behind the steering wheel was a stunning blonde in a sharply white T-shirt and shorts. She was looking at him intently, clearly about to ask something.

Jimmy, a bachelor and always a gentleman at heart, stopped with pleasant anticipation.

‘Excuse me, young man,’ the pretty girl started speaking with a honey voice, ‘from a distance, you seem to be a respectable man with good taste and this is the first time that I am visiting your city. Could you please recommend a decent restaurant not far from here?’

‘Of course, madam,’ Jimmy smiled.

‘When I am very hungry and asking about food, you can just call me Elizabeth.’

Jimmy laughed merrily.

‘Yes, Elizabeth. What kind of cuisine do you prefer - traditional, Italian or eastern?’

‘Delicious,’ she replied without hesitation, while smiling. ‘All the rest, I will endure.’

‘Then the choices would be: an Italian restaurant called *Capriccio* which is just a couple of blocks away if you were to go straight ahead, a Japanese restaurant called *Yamagen* is half a kilometer away to the left from the nearest crossroad, and a wonderful steakhouse called *At George’s* is right here on the other side of the road.’

Jimmy pointed to it with his finger.

‘Hmm,’ the blonde girl wrinkled her forehead. ‘A wide choice. I don’t even know what to do. And where would you be going now, Mr. ...’

She looked at him questioningly.

‘Hopkins. Jimmy Hopkins,’ the TV presenter responded quickly.

‘So, where would Jimmy Hopkins go if he was as hungry as I am now?’

‘To the steakhouse for sure,’ replied Jimmy with no hesitation. ‘When I am very hungry, the jokes are over. Only a good steak can comfort me quickly.’

The girl laughed merrily.

‘Excellent choice,’ she said. ‘So, steak it is then! And bloody.’

‘Just a little,’ Jimmy replied to the cheerful girl, ‘and with a lot of pepper.’

She unbuckled her seatbelt and elegantly got out of the car. Seeing her marvelous figure, the anchorman immediately gave her a mental 10 out of 10. He was about to say goodbye and resume his journey when he heard the honey voice again.

‘So I need to go to the other side?’ Elizabeth asked him and after receiving an affirmative nod added: ‘thank you very much, Mr. Hopkins!’

‘Not at all,’ he said with a smile. ‘Bon Appétit!’

She nodded gratefully with her blonde head again and took a few steps towards the crossing. Following her with his eyes, Jimmy began to move slowly along the sidewalk towards his dull home. Suddenly, the gorgeous blonde stopped and, as if lost in her thoughts, turned her head.

‘Uh, Mr. Hopkins ...’ she began.

‘Jimmy,’ the anchorman corrected her. ‘For a beautiful hungry lady, always simply Jimmy.’

‘Jimmy,’ smiled Elizabeth, ‘you know this is my first chat today and it has given me a great deal of pleasure. Can I ask you something? Do you happen to be hungry? I would be happy to have such a merry and knowledgeable companion as you at the table.’

Jimmy smiled.

‘Even if I was not hungry now, I would still go with you. At least just for a cup of coffee,’ he walked up to her gallantly. ‘The

hospitality of my city, my dear Elizabeth, obliges me to be extremely gallant with such beautiful visitors. Otherwise, my name would immediately be put on a black list, if anyone found out that I said *no*.'

'What excellent traditions and people you have in your town!' Elizabeth laughed. 'If your speech could be put in a jar, I would have the most delicious jam on this coast.'

Then, it was Jimmy's turn to laugh heartily.

'You don't happen to be a professional seducer?' the girl asked him suddenly with mock caution.

'Much worse, Elizabeth. I am a local TV presenter.' Jimmy said with a smile.

'Hell's fire! Well I see then,' Elty the witch laughed merrily, took Jimmy by his arm and nicely walked with her prey towards the restaurant.

* * *

Sue was sitting in front of the computer and was browsing the news which she occasionally received from fourteen spots around the world. She was gradually collecting material for her first magazine. At the same time, she also helped her husband to answer a variety of questions on social networks but only when the language was English. After finishing her work, she printed out the necessary information and turned off the computer.

Sue took a deep breath of air and smiled. She could vaguely smell coffee emanating from the kitchen. The girl first stretched out nicely in the armchair and then stood up smiling. It was time to give her husband some company. Drinking coffee alone was a serious crime for the Beninnis.

* * *

With wonderful steaks having been devoured, Elizabeth and Jimmy ordered coffee and dessert. She chose profiteroles and the TV presenter restricted himself to a fruit salad.

Their conversation that evening was flowing surprisingly easy and smoothly. For the most part, Jimmy was just answering girl's questions. He had already recommended to her a couple of good hotels in the city and told her a little about his work. The guest found that topic very interesting.

'I've always been interested in one question: How much is a TV presenter really interested in the topics that are discussed in his studio?' Elizabeth asked him with a smile.

'This is a great secret that I'll take to my grave,' laughed Jimmy. 'I cannot under any circumstances offend any of my guests. That is the ethics of my profession.'

'But at least with a facial expression could you give me a hint, if you ever felt bad because of some guests?' Curious Elizabeth did not give up.

'Sometimes,' Jimmy took pity on her, 'but very rarely. To be honest, most of the time I have interesting speakers.'

‘Really? Whom of the latest guests do you remember most?’

‘A preacher, curiously enough,’ Jimmy said in a moment curling his lips. ‘Don’t look at me like that. Had anyone told me about it a couple of months ago, I’d have laughed to death.’

‘A preacher? You’ve surprised me very, very much!’ A fire had been lit in the eyes of Elty the witch - a fire of a hunter sensing game. ‘And what's so unusual about him?’

‘He speaks of so many important matters so simply and persuasively that I can’t help agreeing with him on a lot of issues,’ Jimmy raised his hands in dismay. ‘The preacher has only recently appeared in our city. He came here from Italy, it seems.’

‘You say from Italy?’ Elizabeth asked him with interest. Suddenly, a nice plan formed in her head. ‘By any chance, his name isn’t An ...?’

As she tried to utter the name, she started coughing violently and her cough continued for a minute or so. If Jimmy could have heard what the poor witch had heard at that moment, he would be stunned and astounded.

‘You cannot slur the Angels. You're not human and this is not your world. Remember this well!’ Elizabeth the witch heard a calm voice in her head which made her feel unbearably hot.

Elizabeth quickly poured a full glass of water and drank it in one gulp. It was only after a few minutes that she could speak again.

‘Are you ok?’ Jimmy looked at her anxiously. ‘You’re looking very pale.’

‘Everything is fine, Jimmy,’ she said. ‘Just something went down the wrong way and got cough.’

‘Looking at these profiteroles, they do seem quite harmless,’ the anchorman tried joking.

‘You’re right,’ Elizabeth smiled back absent-mindedly.

In fact, the witch Elty was panicking. She had immediately guessed who she had been warned by. Nothing like that had ever happened to her before. Satan needed to be informed about this.

She told Jimmy that she had some very urgent business to attend to and, having exchanged phone numbers, she rushed to say goodbye to him. The anchorman would not let her pay the bill and accompanied her to her car.

Smiling apologetically, Elizabeth got into her Ferrari, waved him goodbye and drove away. Jimmy stood there on the roadside lost in deep thought. He perfectly heard his new friend start pronouncing a name with a beginning just like *Angelo*, but for some reason could not finish it.

Realizing that he did not have enough information to draw any conclusion, he suddenly remembered Elizabeth’s figure. With a smile and in good spirits, he started walking home and this time, there was no interruption to his journey.

* * *

Angelo and Sue were sitting at the table looking through the news articles she had recently printed out. Now, the news came frequently from the other Angels.

‘So many interesting things have been happening in the world!’ Sue said delightedly, moving the papers.

‘As it should be,’ Angelo smiled. ‘Anything less and people today just wouldn’t believe it. The names of the witnesses and the exact spot where it happened are essential. Everything needs to look incontrovertible to the reader. Otherwise, miracles won’t work now.’

The Angel sighed.

‘In today’s world, there are so many electronic innovations, various science fiction films and fairy tales with beautiful graphics, and a variety of magicians, and illusionists. In general, people find it difficult to understand where the tricks end and reality begins. The most important reality for them...’

‘Yes, I’ll need to be very thorough to make sure this is all very convincing,’ Sue nodded and began to sort the mail.

She folded the sheets in piles. In the first pile, there were the facts about people being resurrected. In another pile was information about a miraculous healing. The third pile had all other miracles.

‘We have a lot of material now,’ the girl announced with a smile. ‘Perhaps thanks to these facts, the magazine will really become popular. It may also become another straw which many people could grasp.’

‘In fact, we came to Earth for exactly that,’ her husband smiled warmly. ‘But I think we will need to add the old miracles as well, the ones which had already occurred on Earth before. It would be very good to show the continuation of what has long existed.’

‘Excellent idea,’ Sue agreed. ‘Could you tell me which ones would be best to put in here? At the same time, I will also learn a lot of interesting things about the past.’

Angelo smiled.

‘Of course. It should be something that has long been known to people and which was witnessed by many. But as always, something almost forgotten ...’

Sue nodded and put the sheets aside.

‘If it keeps going like this, I think that in a couple of months, the first issue of *In the world of miracles* will be released.’

‘That will be a good deed with which you can help both me and the Father,’ Angelo smiled.

‘Angie! Do you think magazines like this one will appear in those countries where there are other Angels?’ Sue asked curiously.

‘Perhaps,’ her husband shrugged with a smile. ‘There are a lot of different people around them too and maybe some cute journalist will have a smart idea to write about all of this. They may be issued in other languages or it could only be in English. It doesn’t matter – even if there are several useful magazines, they won’t saturate the world. Just have a look, so much is printed on other topics today! Our important news will be at the tail for the time being.’

The girl nodded.

‘That's for sure. I once decided to count the number of publications on various topics in the whole world – about cars, cosmetics, health and quickly lost count.’

‘That's what I mean,’ Angelo said, stood up and gave his wife a hug.

‘All right, enough about work for today. Let's go and jump in the pool together.’

‘You're not going to splash me, are you?’ Sue asked playfully, getting up from the table.

‘Well, only if someone doesn't attack me again,’ the Angel replied as the young couple went outside laughing.

* * *

‘What's that all about?’ Satan's eyes were flashing with anger.

The four witches that were sitting in front of him had just told him somewhat similar stories about the intimidating voice and about the unbearable heat inside them.

‘Who dares prevent my witches from doing what they want to do?’

‘You really don't know?’ he suddenly heard a very familiar voice inside himself.

From these few words, Satan felt unbearably ill. He felt like he was burning up from the inside. Satan wilted and sat back

down at the table. Then he glanced at the witches blankly and said coldly:

‘I have to think everything over carefully. Everybody’s free to leave.’

The witches rose indecisively and walked slowly to the exit. Satan stayed seated at the table, scratching out deep marks on its surface with his claws.

Seething anger overwhelmed him but at the same time, he was well aware that he could only give orders here, in his dark world. And even then, only while it was tolerated. At any moment, he could be burnt like a match. There was nothing he could do about it — he could only be angry.

The claw marks on the table were growing deeper.

* * *

The Father was looking down on His Earth.

It was so difficult to raise spiritual and beautiful human souls there! Each soul had the potential to soar so high or to fall into a bottomless abyss. And not only on Earth ...

Even the one now called Satan was not always like that. But pride can make any soul blind and insane, if there is too much of it. That is what happened to him and now the light of the Father no longer warmed him as it once did, but instead burned him almost fatally. But, that was his choice.

As for His beloved children and Angels, the Father have never let anyone offend them.

* * *

His Angel was sitting on the shore of the ocean and was looking at the sky - up to where his home was, his Father and his entire family.

Holding that thought, Angelo smiled. His family had slowly started appearing on Earth too - Sue, Peter, Mike, Steve and many others. All those who heard his sermons on TV or in the church and those who had begun to think seriously about what he was saying.

So all these things had not been done in vain even though the majority of the work still laid ahead. From now on, his new earthly family would always be there to help him with everything.

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Igor N. **Bondar**

Heavenly paratrooper

A fantasy story

